

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the central text.

GUZ 19 Psalms

*Bible Commentary:
David Guzik TEV - XIX*

David Guzik

David Guziks' Commentary On
19 Psalms
Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)

The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

Psa 1:1 Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God.

Psa 1:2 Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the LORD, and they study it day and night.

Psa 1:3 They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. They succeed in everything they do.

Psa 1:4 But evil people are not like this at all; they are like straw that the wind blows away.

Psa 1:5 Sinners will be condemned by God and kept apart from God's own people.

Psa 1:6 The righteous are guided and protected by the LORD, but the evil are on the way to their doom.

Psalms 1:1-6

Psalms 1 – The Way of the Righteous and the Way of the Ungodly

Verse six presents a key to understanding Psalms 1 : "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." In this psalm, the way of the righteous and the way of the ungodly are contrasted.

A. The way of the righteous.

1. (1) What the righteous man does not do.

Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

**Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;**

a. **Blessed is the man:** The Hebrew word *esher* is here translated **blessed**, which has the idea of happiness or contentment. *Esher* is a form of the Hebrew word *ashar*, which in its root means "to be straight" or "to be right." **Blessed is the man** speaks of the happiness, the blessedness, the contentment in the life of the man or woman who is right or "straight" with God. The righteous man will be a **blessed** man, a happy man.

i. "*Blessed* means supremely happy or fulfilled. In fact, in Hebrew the word is actually a plural, which denotes either a multiplicity of blessings or an intensification of them." (Boice)

ii. "It is not 'Blessed is the king, blessed is the scholar, blessed is the rich,' but, 'Blessed is the man.' This blessedness is as attainable by the poor, the forgotten and the obscure, as by those whose names figure in history, and are trumpeted by fame." (Spurgeon)

b. **Walks not...nor stands...nor sits:** The blessed man does *not* do certain things. There is a way he will *not* walk, a path he will *not* stand in, and a seat he will *not* sit in.

i. We can say these speak of *thinking, behaving, and belonging*. The righteous man and the ungodly man are different in how they *think*, how they *behave*, and to whom they *belong*.

ii. Others have also seen in this a progression of sin. "The great lesson to be learned from the whole is, sin is *progressive*; one evil propensity or act leads to another. He who acts by *bad counsel* may soon do *evil deeds*; and he who abandons himself to *evil*

doings may end his life in *total apostasy* from God.”
(Clarke)

c. **Walks not in the counsel of the ungodly:** The ungodly have **counsel**, and the righteous man will not walk in it. With all the advice that comes to us, from so many different sources, the righteous man knows how to stay away from the **counsel of the ungodly**.

i. First, it means the righteous man knows how to *discern* the **counsel of the ungodly**. Many fail at this point. They do not even consider if **counsel** is godly or **ungodly**. They hear advice, or theories about their problems, and they find themselves agreeing or disagreeing without considering, “Is this godly or ungodly counsel?”

ii. The righteous man is also discerning enough to know the **counsel of the ungodly** can come from one’s own self. Our own conscience, our own mind, our own heart, can give us ungodly counsel.

iii. The righteous man knows where to find completely godly counsel: *Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors* (Psa 119:24). God’s word is always the best counselor, and godly counselors will always bring the truth of God’s word to help someone who wants counseling.

d. **Nor stands in the path of sinners:** Sinners have a **path** where they stand, and the righteous man knows he does not belong on that path. **Path** speaks of a way, a road, a direction – and the righteous man is not traveling in the same direction as sinners.

i. The righteous man is not afraid to take a less-traveled road, because he knows it leads to blessing, happiness, and eternal life. *Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to*

destruction, and there are many who go in by it (Mat 7:13).

ii. The righteous can have the confidence of Psa 16:11 : *You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* God has a path, and it is a good road to take.

e. **Nor sits in the seat of the scornful:** The scornful love to sit and criticize the people of God and the things of God. The righteous man will not sit in that **seat**!

i. When others are putting down Christians, it is easy to sit with them and criticize them. It is easy because there are many things to criticize about Christians. But it is wrong, because we are then sitting **in the seat of the scornful**.

ii. Instead, we should be proud to follow Jesus Christ. "Be out-and-out for him; unfurl your colours, never hide them, but nail them to the mast, and say to all who ridicule the saints, 'If you have any ill words for the followers of Christ, pour them out upon me...but know this – ye shall hear it whether you like it or not – 'I love Christ.'" (Spurgeon)

2. (2) *What the righteous man does.*

**But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.**

a. **His delight is in the law of the LORD:** Throughout Psalms, the phrase **law of the LORD** is used to describe God's entire word, not only the "law" portion of the first five books of the Bible. The righteous man is delighted with the word of God!

i. What makes you happy? What gets you excited? This is a good way to see what is important to you. If personal pleasure is the only thing that makes you

happy, then you are a selfish, self-centered person. If being with your family or friends delights you, that can be better, but it still falls short. The righteous man finds **his delight...in the law of the LORD**.

ii. Martin Luther said that he could not live in paradise *without* the word of God, but he could live well enough in hell *with* it.

iii. "Man must have some delight, some supreme pleasure. His heart was never meant to be a vacuum. If not filled with the best things, it will be filled with the unworthy and disappointing." (Spurgeon)

iv. If a person delights in something, you don't have to beg him to do it or to like it. He will do it all by himself. You can measure your **delight** for the word of God by how much you hunger for it.

b. In His law he meditates day and night: The righteous man *ponders* the word of God. He does not just hear it and forget it; he *thinks* about it. Christians should meditate on God's word!

i. In eastern meditation, the goal is to *empty* the mind. This is dangerous, because an empty mind may present an open invitation to deception or a demonic spirit. But in Christian meditation, the goal is to *fill* your mind with the word of God. This can be done by carefully thinking about each word and phrase, applying it to one's self, and praying it back to the Lord.

ii. "Meditation chews the cud, and gets the sweetness and nutritive virtue of the Word into the heart and life: this is the way the godly bring forth much fruit." (Ashwood, cited by Spurgeon)

iii. Many lack because they only *read* and do not *meditate*. "It is not only reading that does us good;

but the soul inwardly feeding on it, and digesting it. A preacher once told me that he had read the Bible through twenty times on his knees and had never found the doctrine of election there. Very likely not. It is a most uncomfortable position in which to read. If he had sat in an easy chair he would have been better able to understand it." (Spurgeon)

iv. The righteous man only has God's word on his mind two times a day: **day and night**. That about covers it all!

3. (3) How the righteous man is blessed.

**He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.**

a. **He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water:** A tree by a river has a continual source of water. It will never wither away, because it is always getting what it needs. If we are constantly needy, it may be worth examining if we are **planted by the rivers of water** or not.

i. This would also be a **tree** that is strong and stable, sinking down deep roots. The life of the righteous man is marked by strength and stability.

b. **That brings forth its fruit in its season:** The righteous man bears fruit, such as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The fruit comes naturally from this tree, because it is **planted by the rivers of water**. It is abiding in a life-source. As Jesus spoke of bearing fruit in Joh 15:5, as we abide in Him. Fruit also has a **season**. Some get discouraged when they begin to walk as righteous men, and fruit is not immediately evident.

They need to wait until they bring forth **fruit in its season**.

i. "There are no barren trees in God's orchard, and yet they may have their fits of barrenness, as an apple tree sometimes hath; but they will reflourish with advantage." (Trapp)

c. **Whose leaf also shall not wither**: Brown, dead, withered leaves are signs of death and dryness. The righteous man does not have these signs of death and dryness; his "leaves" are green and alive.

d. **And whatever he does shall prosper**: It isn't that the righteous man has a "Midas Touch," and everything he does makes him rich and comfortable. But in the life of the righteous man, God brings forth something good and wonderful out of everything. Even tough circumstances bring forth something that **shall prosper**.

B. The way of the ungodly.

1. (4) *The dangerous place of the ungodly.*

**The ungodly are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.**

a. **The ungodly are not so**: Everything true about the righteous man – stable as a tree, continual life and nourishment, fruitful, alive, and prosperous – is **not so** regarding the **ungodly**.

i. It may often seem like the **ungodly** have these things, and sometimes it seems they have them more than the righteous. But it is **not so**! Any of these things are fleeting in the life of the **ungodly**; it can be said that they don't really have them at all.

b. **Are like the chaff which the wind drives away**: **Chaff** is the light "shell" around a kernel of grain, which must be stripped away before the kernel of grain can be

ground into flour. **Chaff** was light enough that it could be separated from the grain by throwing a scoopful into the wind and letting the wind drive away the **chaff**. This is how unstable, how lacking in substance, the ungodly are.

i. Spurgeon on **chaff**: "Intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away." There is a huge difference between a tree and **chaff**.

2. (5) *The dangerous future of the ungodly.*

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,

Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

a. **Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment:** Because the **ungodly** have no "weight," they will be found lacking on the day of judgment. As it was said of King Belshazzar in the book of Daniel, *You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting* (Dan 5:27).

b. **Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous:** This is true in the future, because **sinners** will not share the same glorious future of the **righteous**. It is also true in the present, because **sinners** sense they do not belong **in the congregation of the righteous** if they insist on remaining **sinners**.

3. (6) *Summary: The way of the righteous and the way of the ungodly.*

**For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.**

a. **The LORD knows the way of the righteous:** The righteous can have peace because a loving God in heaven knows their way, and will protect and preserve them.

i. "Or, as the Hebrew has it yet more fully, 'The Lord is *knowing* the way of the righteous.' He is constantly looking on their way, and though it may be often in mist and darkness, yet the Lord knoweth it." (Spurgeon)

b. **The way of the ungodly shall perish:** The way of the ungodly leads to destruction. They are on a broad path that may seem comfortable now and the path gives them lots of company, but in the end they **shall perish**.

c. At least four times in the Book of Acts, Christianity is called *the Way*. Certainly, it is the **way of the righteous**, not the **way of the ungodly**. Which way are you on?

The Reign of the Lord's Anointed

Psa 2:1 Why do the nations plan rebellion? Why do people make their useless plots?

Psa 2:2 Their kings revolt, their rulers plot together against the LORD and against the king he chose.

Psa 2:3 "Let us free ourselves from their rule," they say; "let us throw off their control."

Psa 2:4 From his throne in heaven the Lord laughs and mocks their feeble plans.

Psa 2:5 Then he warns them in anger and terrifies them with his fury.

Psa 2:6 "On Zion, my sacred hill," he says, "I have installed my king."

Psa 2:7 "I will announce," says the king, "what the LORD has declared. He said to me: 'You are my son; today I have become your father.

Psa 2:8 Ask, and I will give you all the nations; the whole earth will be yours.

Psa 2:9 You will break them with an iron rod; you will shatter them in pieces like a clay pot.' "

Psa 2:10 Now listen to this warning, you kings; learn this lesson, you rulers of the world:

Psa 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear; tremble

Psa 2:12 and bow down to him; or else his anger will be quickly aroused, and you will suddenly die. Happy are all who go to him for protection.

Psalms 2:1-12

Psalms 2 – The Reign of the LORD’s Anointed

Like many psalms, the theme of Psalms 2 is emphasized in the final verse. We can defy God and perish, or we can surrender to Him and be blessed. The psalm itself does not identify its author, but Act 4:25-26 clearly attributes it to David.

A. The rage of nations and the laugh of God.

1. (1-3) The nations rebel.

**Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”**

a. **Why do the nations rage:** The psalmist seems genuinely mystified. The nations have no *reason* to rage against God, and they have no *benefit* in raging against Him. Their opposition against God is nothing but a **vain thing**.

b. **The rulers take counsel together:** Since the time of Babel, men have continued to band themselves together against God. Their mistaken belief is that two or more men united against God have a better chance than one man set against God.

c. **Against the LORD and against His Anointed:** They oppose both the LORD and His Anointed. **Anointed** speaks of the Christ, the Anointed One. Since Jesus is the perfect representation of the Father (Joh 10:30; Joh 14:9), opposing God the Father, is to oppose Jesus. If you are against Jesus, you are against God the Father.

d. **Let us break Their bonds in pieces:** Those who oppose the LORD and His Anointed think of God as a bondage-bringer. This attitude is evidence of spiritual insanity, because God is a bondage-breaker, not a bondage-bringer.

i. "To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light.... We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?" (Spurgeon)

2. (4-6) *The LORD's laugh from heaven.*

**He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
"Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion."**

a. **He who sits in the heavens shall laugh:** God looks at the way man plots against Him and He laughs. God isn't afraid or confused or depressed about the opposition of man. God laughs at it.

i. God laughs because He **sits in the heavens**. He sits as the Great King on a glorious throne. He isn't pacing back and forth in the throne room of heaven, wondering what He should do next. God **sits** in perfect peace and assurance.

ii. God laughs because He **sits in the heavens**. It isn't an earthly throne He occupies; it is the throne of heaven with authority over all creation. What does heaven have to fear from earth?

iii. "God does not tremble. He does not hide behind a vast celestial rampart, counting the enemy and calculating whether or not he has sufficient force to counter this new challenge to his kingdom. He does not even rise from where he is sitting. He simply 'laughs' at these great imbeciles." (Boice)

iv. "This derisive laughter of God is the comfort of all those who love righteousness. It is the laughter of the might of holiness; it is the laughter of the strength of love. God does not exult over the sufferings of sinning men. He does hold in derision all the proud boastings and violence of such as seek to prevent His accomplishment of His will." (Morgan)

b. **The LORD shall hold them in derision:** Through the centuries, many have opposed God and His Kingdom in Jesus Christ. Each one of these opponents shall be frustrated and crushed.

i. A famous example of an opponent of Christianity was the Roman Emperor Diocletian (reigning A.D. 284-305). He was such a determined enemy of Christians that he persecuted the church mercilessly, and fancied that he had defeated Christianity. He ordered the making a medal with this inscription: "The name of Christianity being extinguished."

ii. Diocletian also set up two monuments on the frontier of his empire with these inscriptions:

Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Caesares Augusti for having extended the Roman Empire in the

east and the west and for having extinguished the name of Christians who brought the Republic to ruin

Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Caesares Augusti for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ for having extended the worship of the gods

iii. Diocletian is dead and gone, a footnote on the pages of history. The fame and glory of Jesus Christ is spread over all the earth. **The LORD shall hold them in derision.**

c. **He shall speak to them in His wrath:** God laughs in heaven, but He doesn't remain inactive. He laughs, but He doesn't *only* laugh. Before He acts against defiant mankind, He first *speaks* to rebellious humanity.

i. This shows the great mercy of God. He has every reason and every right to simply *act* against defiant men. Love and mercy compel God to **speak** a word of warning before He acts.

d. **I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion:** God wants defiant mankind to know that He has established a **King**. The defiant men closest in view in the psalm are kings and rulers, and God especially wants them to know there is a **King** greater than they are. God's King is *established (set)*, and established in Jerusalem (**Zion**).

B. God's decree to the nations.

1. (7-9) *The decree of the Son.*

"I will declare the decree:

The LORD has said to Me,

'You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.

Ask of Me, and I will give You

The nations *for* Your inheritance,

And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.

**You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'"**

a. **I will declare the decree:** The following passage indicates that this is the LORD's Anointed Himself speaking. He will **declare the decree** that God the Father spoke to Him.

b. **You are My Son, today I have begotten You:** The LORD's Anointed recalls what God the Father spoke to Him, identifying Him as the Son of the Father and emphasizing His standing as **begotten** of the Father.

i. The writer to the Hebrews quotes this passage in Heb 1:5 as evidence of the deity of Jesus and superiority to all angels. He mentions the *more excellent name* Jesus received, greater than all the angels. This is the "name" **Son**. While angels are sometimes called the *sons of God* in a generic sense (Job 1:6), the Father never said "**My Son**" to any angel in a specific sense. That is reserved for God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity.

ii. **Begotten** is also an important idea, as a contrast to *created*. Jesus was not created; rather He created everything that was created (Col 1:16-17). **Begotten** describes a relationship between two beings of the same essential nature and being, but we *create* things of a different essential being and nature than ourselves. A man *creates* a statue but *begets* a child.

c. **I will give You the nations for Your inheritance:** The LORD's Anointed holds the nations as His inheritance. He will rule over all nations and all judgment is committed to Him (Joh 5:22).

i. Rev 11:15 describes an exciting consummation of this inheritance: *Then the seventh angel sounded:*

And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

d. **You shall break them with a rod of iron:** The LORD's Anointed has such power over the nations that they are like clay pots that he can shatter with a blow from a **rod of iron**. This shows why it is so foolish for the nations to defy the LORD and His Anointed. There is no *reason* and no *benefit* to their defiant opposition.

2. (10-12) *The decree to the nations about the Son.*

**Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.**

a. **Be wise, O kings:** After the words of warning from the LORD's Anointed, the psalmist counsels the **kings** of the earth to give up their foolish defiance of the LORD.

b. **Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling:** The psalmist calls the kings of the earth to surrender to God, giving Him proper reverence. In this submitted, surrendered place they can **rejoice** – yet with appropriate **trembling**.

c. **Kiss the Son:** This primarily has in mind the kiss of submission, where a dignitary receives the humble kiss of an inferior. It also hints at the *affection* God wants in relationship to Him. God wants us to recognize our proper place before Him, but to also **rejoice** in Him and be affectionate in our relationship.

i. "Kissing was the token of *subjugation* and *friendship*." (Clarke)

ii. If the **kings** and **judges** of the earth are commanded to humble themselves before the LORD's Anointed, recognizing His total superiority, then what of the rest of us? Speaking to the **kings** and **judges** therefore includes all of humanity.

d. **Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him:** Those who defy God are *broken*, but those who depend on Him are *blessed*. The psalmist leaves the choice with everyone: broken or blessed?

Save Me, O My God

Psa 3:1 I have so many enemies, LORD, so many who turn against me!

Psa 3:2 They talk about me and say, "God will not help him."

Psa 3:3 But you, O LORD, are always my shield from danger; you give me victory and restore my courage.

Psa 3:4 I call to the LORD for help, and from his sacred hill he answers me.

Psa 3:5 I lie down and sleep, and all night long the LORD protects me.

Psa 3:6 I am not afraid of the thousands of enemies who surround me on every side.

Psa 3:7 Come, LORD! Save me, my God! You punish all my enemies and leave them powerless to harm me.

Psa 3:8 Victory comes from the LORD—may he bless his people.

Psalms 3:1-8

Psalms 3 – Peace in the Midst of the Storm

*This is the first psalm with a title: **A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son.** James Montgomery Boice points out that since these titles are in the canonical text of the Hebrew Bible, "They are to be taken with absolute seriousness throughout." The events are recorded in 2 Samuel 15-18, but the heart of David at that difficult time is recorded in this psalm.*

A. David's trouble and God's help.

1. (1-2) What those who troubled David did.

LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!

Many are they who rise up against me.

Many are they who say of me,

"There is no help for him in God." Selah

a. **How they have increased who trouble me:** At the writing of this psalm David was in a great deal of trouble. His own son led what seemed to be a successful rebellion against him. Many of his previous friends and associates forsook him and joined the ranks of those who troubled him (2Sa 15:13).

b. **There is no help for him in God:** David's situation was so bad that many felt he was beyond God's help. Those who said this probably didn't feel that God was *unable* to help David; they probably felt that God was *unwilling* to help him. They looked at David's past sin and figured, "This is all what he deserves from God. **There is no help for him in God.**"

i. Shimei was an example of someone who said that God was against David, and he was just getting what he deserved (2Sa 16:7-8). This thought was most painful of all for David – the thought that God might be *against him* and that **there is no help for him in God.**

ii. "If all the trials which come from heaven, all the temptations which ascend from hell, and all the crosses which arise from the earth, could be mixed and pressed together, they would not make a trial so terrible as that which is contained in this verse. It is the most bitter of all afflictions to be led to fear that there is no help for us in God." (Spurgeon)

c. **Selah**: The idea in the Hebrew for this word (occurring 74 times in the Old Testament) is for a *pause*. Most people think it speaks of a reflective pause, a pause to meditate on the words just spoken. It may also be a musical instruction, for a musical interlude of some kind.

2. (3-4) *What God did for David in the midst of trouble.*

**But You, O LORD, are a shield for me,
My glory and the One who lifts up my head.
I cried to the LORD with my voice,
And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah**

a. **You, O LORD, are a shield for me**: Though many said there was no help for him in God, David knew that God was his **shield**. Others – even many others – couldn't shake David's confidence in a God of love and help.

i. Under attack from a cunning and ruthless enemy, David needed a **shield**. He knew that God *was* his shield. This wasn't a prayer asking God to fulfill this; this is a strong declaration of fact: **You, O LORD, are a shield for me.**

b. **My glory and the One who lifts my head**: God was more than David's protection. He also was the **One** who put David on higher ground, lifting his head and showing him glory. There was nothing glorious or head-lifting in David's circumstances, but there was in his God.

i. Men find **glory** in all sorts of things – fame, power, prestige, or possessions. David found his **glory** in the LORD. “Oh, my soul, hast thou made God thy glory? Others boast in their wealth, beauty, position, achievements: dost thou find in God what they find in these?” (Meyer)

c. **I cried to the LORD with my voice:** “Surely, silent prayers are heard. Yes, but good men often find that, even in secret, they pray better aloud than they do when they utter no vocal sound.” (Spurgeon)

d. **He heard me from His holy hill:** Others said that God wanted nothing to do with David, but he could gloriously say, “**He heard me.**” Though Absalom took over Jerusalem and forced David out of the capitol, David knew that it wasn’t Absalom enthroned on God’s **holy hill**. The LORD Himself still held that ground and would hear and help David from **His holy hill**.

B. Blessing from and to God.

1. (5-6) *God blesses David.*

I lay down and slept;

I awoke, for the LORD sustained me.

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people

Who have set *themselves* against me all around.

a. **I lay down and slept; I awoke:** David used both of these as evidence of God’s blessing. *Sleep* was a blessing, because David was under such intense pressure from the circumstances of Absalom’s rebellion that sleep might be impossible, but he **slept**. *Waking* was another blessing, because many wondered if David would live to see a new day.

i. “Truly it must have been a soft pillow indeed that could make him forget his danger, who then had such

a disloyal army at his back hunting of him.” (Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. God sustains us in our sleep, but we take it for granted. Think of it: you are asleep, unconscious, dead to the world – yet you breathe, your heart pumps, your organs operate. The same God who sustains us in our sleep will sustain us in our difficulties.

b. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people:

With God sustaining him, David could stand against any foe. Before it was written, David knew the truth of Rom 8:31 : *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

2. (7-8) *David blesses God.*

Arise, O LORD;

Save me, O my God!

For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone;

You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Salvation *belongs* to the LORD.

Your blessing *is* upon Your people. Selah

a. **Arise, O LORD.... For You have struck all my enemies:** David’s mind was on both what he trusted God to do (**Save me, O my God**) and on what God had done (**struck all my enemies...broken the teeth of the ungodly**). Knowing what God *had* done gives David confidence in what the LORD *would* do.

b. **Arise, O LORD:** This recalled the words of Num 10:35, where Moses used this phrase as the children of Israel broke camp in the wilderness. It was a *military* phrase, calling on God to go forth to both defend Israel and lead them to victory.

c. **Broken the teeth of the ungodly:** This vivid metaphor is also used in Psa 58:6. It speaks of the total

domination and defeat of the enemy. David looked for protection in this psalm, but more than protection – he looked for *victory*. It wasn't enough for David to survive the threat to the kingdom. He had to be victorious over the threat, and he would be with the blessing of God.

d. **Salvation belongs to the LORD:** David understood that **salvation** – both in the ultimate and immediate sense – was God's property. It isn't the property of any one nation or sect, but of the LORD God. To be saved, one must deal with the LORD Himself.

e. **Your blessing is upon Your people:** This showed David's heart in a time of *personal* calamity. He wasn't only concerned for God's hand upon himself, but upon all God's people. He didn't pray for preservation and victory in the trial with Absalom just for his own sake, but because it was best for the nation.

Answer Me When I Call

Psa 4:1 Answer me when I pray, O God, my defender! When I was in trouble, you helped me. Be kind to me now and hear my prayer.

Psa 4:2 How long will you people insult me? How long will you love what is worthless and go after what is false?

Psa 4:3 Remember that the LORD has chosen the righteous for his own, and he hears me when I call to him.

Psa 4:4 Tremble with fear and stop sinning; think deeply about this, when you lie in silence on your beds.

Psa 4:5 Offer the right sacrifices to the LORD, and put your trust in him.

Psa 4:6 There are many who pray: "Give us more blessings, O LORD. Look on us with kindness!"

Psa 4:7 But the joy that you have given me is more than they will ever have with all their grain and wine.

Psa 4:8 When I lie down, I go to sleep in peace; you alone, O LORD, keep me perfectly safe.

Psalms 4:1-8

Psalms 4 – Talking to God and Men

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.** The title of the psalm indicates that it was directed toward **the Chief Musician**, whom some suppose to be the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). The title also tells us that the song was deliberately written to be accompanied **with stringed instruments**. In this psalm David poured out his complaint against slanderous enemies and found peace and refuge in God.*

A. David talks to God and to men.

1. (1) David talks to God.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.

a. **Hear me when I call:** There was *passion* in David's cry. He didn't want to just cast up words toward heaven. He needed God's attention to his present problem.

i. Often *power* in prayer is lacking because there is little *passion* in prayer. It isn't that we persuade God by emotional displays, but God wants us to care deeply about the things He cares deeply about. The prophet Isaiah spoke with sorrow about the lack of this in Israel: *And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You* (Isa 64:7). This is a good example of David stirring himself up to take hold of God.

b. **O God of my righteousness:** David knew that his righteousness came from God, and not from himself. He calls upon the God who makes him righteous.

c. **You have relieved me...Have mercy on me:** In a familiar pattern, David used past mercy as a ground for future help. "God, I know You haven't blessed me to this point to abandon me, so please **have mercy on me.**"

i. "This is another instance of David's common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour." (Spurgeon)

2. (2-3) *David talks to men.*

**How long, O you sons of men,
Will you turn my glory to shame?
How long will you love worthlessness
And seek falsehood? Selah
But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him
who is godly;
The LORD will hear when I call to Him.**

a. **How long:** David asked a valid question. Just **how long** will the ungodly keep to their way? They can't keep to it forever, so they may as well abandon it *now* and be blessed.

i. If we find ourselves on a compromising course, it is valid to ask, "**How long?** If I extend this course of action out to its logical and inevitable conclusion, where will I be? Knowing this, **how long** will I play around with this sin?"

b. **How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?** Many try to connect Psalms 3 with Psalms 4, thinking that this was also written in connection with Absalom's rebellion. This is probably incorrect, because the focus in this psalm isn't on David's

physical safety or his kingdom, but on his reputation. Wicked men slandered David.

i. "In this psalm the problem is one of malicious slander and lies. It is the psalmist's reputation rather than his person that is being attacked." (Boice)

ii. **Turn my glory to shame:** Jesus experienced what David experienced. Wicked men tried to turn almost every glorious thing in His ministry into **shame**.

c. **The LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly:** David knew that he and other godly people were set apart for God. There are many reasons why we set things apart.

- We set things apart for our own enjoyment.
- We set things apart for greater purity.
- We set things apart for special service.

i. For all these reasons and more, God sets us apart unto Himself.

d. **The LORD will hear when I call to Him:** The ungodly have a disaster waiting for them, but the **godly** have a great reward in the LORD. This is why David knew, **the LORD will hear when I call to Him**.

i. All Christians should have the same assurance. They should be confident that God will hear their prayers. When prayer seems ineffective, it is worth it to take a spiritual inventory to see if there is a reason for unanswered prayer. The Bible tells us there are several possible reasons why prayer may not be answered.

- Not abiding in Jesus (Joh 15:7).
- Unbelief (Mat 17:20-21).
- Failure to fast (Mat 17:21).

- A Bad marriage relationship (1Pe 3:7).
- Unconfessed sin (Jas 5:16).
- Lying and deceitfulness (Psa 17:1).
- Lack of Bible reading and Bible teaching (Pro 28:9).
- Trusting in the length or form of prayer (Mat 6:7).

B. David talks to himself.

1. (4-5) David calms himself before the LORD.

Be angry, and do not sin.

Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.

Selah

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,

And put your trust in the LORD.

a. **Be angry, and do not sin:** With the ungodliness around him, David had reason to **be angry**, but he had no reason to **sin**. He reminded himself to not sin in his anger, and to find solace in meditation before the LORD.

b. **Meditate within your heart:** David spoke of the Biblical practice of meditation, not the Eastern practice of meditation. In Biblical meditation, we *fill* our heart and mind with God's word. In eastern meditation, the idea is to *empty* the heart and mind, leaving it open potentially for deceiving spirits.

c. **Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD:** David knew the value of doing religious things (**offer the sacrifices**), yet he also knew that those could not replace **trust in the LORD**. When religious observance is coupled with true trust in God, we draw near to God and experience the benefits of drawing near.

2. (6-8) David receives blessing from God.

There are many who say, "Who will show us any good?"

LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.

You have put gladness in my heart,

More than in the season that their grain and wine increased.

I will both lie down in peace, and sleep;

For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

a. **Who will show us any good?** The voice of the ungodly cynic echoed in David's ear. After continual disappointment from man, we may begin to doubt if God **will show us any good**.

b. **LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us:** Despite what the cynics said or thought, David trusted that the LORD would show him good.

i. David seemed to claim it upon the Aaronic promise of blessing in Num 6:24-26 :

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine upon you,

And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,

And give you peace.

c. **You have put gladness in my heart:** When we know that the face of God shines favorably on us, it puts **gladness** in the heart. Though David was in distress, vexed by ungodly men all around, he could still have **gladness** in his **heart** because the LORD put it there.

d. **More than in the season that their grain and wine increased:** The ungodly can be happy when the money is coming in and everything is prosperous. David could be happy even in distressing times, because the LORD **put gladness in** his heart.

e. **I will both lie down in peace, and sleep:** David could sleep well at night, even in distressing times and surrounded by the ungodly. He slept well because his safety was from the LORD, not from circumstances or even feelings.

i. We can imagine a man lying down to sleep, tormented by all of what his enemies or pretend friends say about him. David could be that man, but instead he trusted in the LORD. He therefore had a gladness that the world could not take away, even with all their slander and lies.

ii. In his proverbs from *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Ben Franklin had some good advice: "Since I cannot govern my own tongue, tho' within my own teeth, how can I hope to govern the tongues of others?"

f. **For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety:**

G. Campbell Morgan points out that David's idea of **alone** here was not the LORD and none other. Instead, the idea was that David found safety in his solitude with God.

i. "The thought of the word *alone* is 'in loneliness,' or as Rotherham renders it 'in seclusion'; and the word refers to the one going asleep. This is a glorious conception of sleep. Jehovah gathers the trusting soul into a place of safety by taking it away from all the things which trouble or harass...the tried and tired child of His love is pavilioned in His peace." (Morgan)

Lead Me in Your Righteousness

Psa 5:1 Listen to my words, O LORD, and hear my sighs.

Psa 5:2 Listen to my cry for help, my God and king! I pray to you, O LORD;

Psa 5:3 you hear my voice in the morning; at sunrise I offer my prayer and wait for your answer.

Psa 5:4 You are not a God who is pleased with wrongdoing; you allow no evil in your presence.

Psa 5:5 You cannot stand the sight of the proud; you hate all wicked people.

Psa 5:6 You destroy all liars and despise violent, deceitful people.

Psa 5:7 But because of your great love I can come into your house; I can worship in your holy Temple and bow down to you in reverence.

Psa 5:8 LORD, I have so many enemies! Lead me to do your will; make your way plain for me to follow.

Psa 5:9 What my enemies say can never be trusted; they only want to destroy. Their words are flattering and smooth, but full of deadly deceit.

Psa 5:10 Condemn and punish them, O God; may their own plots cause their ruin. Drive them out of your presence because of their many sins and their rebellion against you.

Psa 5:11 But all who find safety in you will rejoice; they can always sing for joy. Protect those who love you; because of you they are truly happy.

Psa 5:12 You bless those who obey you, LORD; your love protects them like a shield.

Psalms 5:1-12

Psalms 5 – A Morning Prayer

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. With flutes. A Psalm of David**. The title of the psalm indicates that it was directed toward **the Chief Musician**, whom some suppose to be the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). The title also tells us that the song was deliberately written to be accompanied **with flutes**. It shows David coming to*

the LORD in the morning and receiving the strength and joy he needs to make it through the day against many adversaries.

A. Approaching God in the morning.

1. (1-3) David approaches God.

**Give ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my meditation.**

**Give heed to the voice of my cry,
My King and my God,
For to You I will pray.**

**My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD;
In the morning I will direct *it* to You,
And I will look up.**

a. **Give ear...consider...give heed:** David longed for an audience with God. Using the Hebrew method of parallelism, he repeated the same idea three times: "LORD, please listen to me."

b. **For to You I will pray:** David prayed *to God*. This may sound elementary, but it is an essential aspect of prayer. Often, we come to prayer so full of our request or our feelings that we never consciously focus on God and sense His presence. David was a great man of prayer because his prayer time was focused on God.

i. "Very much of so-called prayer, both public and private, is not unto God. In order that a prayer should be really unto God, there must be a definite and conscious approach to God when we pray; we must have a definite and vivid realization that God is bending over us and listening as we pray." (Torrey, *How to Pray*)

c. **My voice You shall hear in the morning:** David made it a point to pray **in the morning**. He did this because he wanted to honor God at the beginning of his

day, and this set the tone for an entire day dedicated unto God.

i. Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China, had trouble finding time alone with God. He began to wake himself up at 2:00 in the morning and used those quiet hours when everyone else slept to commune with God.

ii. "What is a slothful sinner to think of himself, when he reads, concerning the holy name of Jesus, that 'in the morning, rising up a great while before the day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed!'" (Horne)

iii. "This is the fittest time for [connecting] with God. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. While the dew is on the grass, let grace drop upon the soul." (Spurgeon)

d. **In the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up:** David gave us what to do *before* prayer and *after* prayer. Before we pray, we should **direct** our prayer. After we pray, we **look up** with expectancy to heaven, really believing that God will answer.

i. The idea behind **direct** is not "to aim" but "to order, to arrange." "It is the word that is used for the laying in order of the wood and pieces of the victim upon the altar, and it is used also for the putting of the shewbread upon the table. It means just this: 'I will arrange my prayer before thee,' I will lay it out upon the altar in the morning, just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice." (Spurgeon)

ii. "It is manifestly a mistake to pray at haphazard. There is too much random praying with us all. We do not return again and again to the same petition, pressing it home with all humility and reverence, and

arguing the case, as Abraham did his for the cities of the plain.” (Meyer)

iii. “Do we not miss very much of the sweetness and efficacy of prayer by a want of careful meditation before it, and of hopeful expectation after it? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers.” (Spurgeon)

2. (4-8) *A contrast between the wicked man and the godly man.*

For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness,

Nor shall evil dwell with You.

The boastful shall not stand in Your sight;

You hate all workers of iniquity.

You shall destroy those who speak falsehood;

The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy;

In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;

Make Your way straight before my face.

a. **You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness:** David meditated on the righteous character of God. Our actions matter before a God who hates **all workers of iniquity**.

i. As David drew closer to God, he became more aware of God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. “This is a good way to measure how well you are praying and whether, as you pray, you are drawing close to God or are merely mouthing words. If you are drawing

close to God, you will become increasingly sensitive to sin, which is inevitable since the God you are approaching is a holy God.” (Boice)

b. **I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy:** This was David’s confidence. It wasn’t that David thought that he was righteous, and all others were sinners. His ground of confidence was the **mercy** of God.

c. **In fear of You I will worship:** David’s worship wasn’t based on his *feelings*, but on his reverence for a righteous, merciful God.

d. **Make Your way straight before my face:** This reflects David’s constant reliance on God. He needed God to lead him and to make the way **straight**. David walked the right way but was humble about it. He knew it was only God’s power and work in him that kept him from the way of the wicked.

B. Description and destiny.

1. (9-10) *The description and destiny of the wicked.*

For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;

Their inward part *is* destruction;

Their throat *is* an open tomb;

They flatter with their tongue.

Pronounce them guilty, O God!

Let them fall by their own counsels;

Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions,

For they have rebelled against You.

a. **There is no faithfulness in their mouth:** David focused on what the wicked say as evidence of their wickedness. David understood what Jesus said later in Mat 12:34 : *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. Our righteousness or wickedness will sooner or later show up in our speech.

i. David felt the sting of wicked words and lies against him. Yet this prayer shows that something good came out of these attacks from the enemy. "Thus a man's enemies, while they oblige him to pray more fervently, and to watch more narrowly over his conduct, oftentimes become his best friends." (Horne)

b. **They flatter with their tongue:** "Always beware of people who flatter you, and especially when they tell you that they do not flatter you, and that they know you cannot endure flattery, for you are then being most fulsomely flattered, so be on your guard against the tongue of the flatterer." (Spurgeon)

c. **Let them fall by their own counsels:** David prayed that the wicked would come to their deserved end. As rebels against God, they deserved the guilty sentence.

2. (11-12) *The description and destiny of the righteous.*

**But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;**

**Let those also who love Your name
Be joyful in You.**

**For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;
With favor You will surround him as *with* a shield.**

a. **Let all those rejoice who put their trust in You:** The righteous aren't made righteous by their words. The righteous are those who **trust** the LORD and **love** His **name**. But their righteousness is *evident* in their words. They **rejoice**, they **shout for joy**, and they are **joyful in** the LORD.

i. "A touch of enthusiasm would be the salvation of many a man's religion. Some Christians are good enough people: they are like wax candles, but they are not lighted. Oh, for a touch of flame! Then would

they scatter light, and thus become of service to their families. 'Let them shout for joy.' Why not? Let not orderly folks object. One said to me the other day, 'When I hear you preach I feel as if I must have a shout!' My friend, shout if you feel forced to do so. (Here a hearer cried, 'Glory!') Our brother cries, 'Glory!' and I say so too. 'Glory!' The shouting need not always be done in a public service, or it might hinder devout hearing; but there are times and places where a glorious outburst of enthusiastic joy would quicken life in all around. The ungodly are not half so restrained in their blasphemy as we are in our praise." (Spurgeon)

b. But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You: This is a *permit*, a *precept*, a *prayer*, and a *promise*.

i. You have *permission* for joy. "You have here a ticket to the banquets of joy. You may be as happy as ever you like. You have divine permission to shout for joy." (Spurgeon)

ii. You have a *precept*, a command for joy: "Come, ye mournful ones, be glad. Ye discontented grumblers, come out of that dog-hole! Enter the palace of the King! Quit your dunghills; ascend your thrones." (Spurgeon)

iii. You should *pray* for joy, both in yourself and others – especially servants of the LORD. "If you lose your joy in your religion, you will be a poor worker: you cannot bear strong testimony, you cannot bear stern trial, you cannot lead a powerful life. In proportion as you maintain your joy, you will be strong *in* the Lord, and *for* the Lord." (Spurgeon)

iv. You have a *promise* for joy: "God promises joy and gladness to believers. Light is sown for them: the Lord

will turn their night into day.” (Spurgeon)

c. **You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him:** This is the greatest blessing of all – the **favor** of God. Knowing that God looks on us with favor and pleasure is the greatest knowledge in the world. This is our standing in *grace*.

i. A **shield** does not protect any one area of the body. It is large and mobile enough to cover any and every area of the body. It is armor over armor. This is how fully the favor of God, our standing in grace, protects us.

ii. When Martin Luther was on his way to face a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church to answer for what the church said were his heretical teachings, one of the Cardinal’s servants taunted him saying, “Where will you find shelter if your patron, the Elector of Saxony, should desert you?” Luther answered, “Under the shelter of heaven.”

O Lord, Deliver My Life

Psa 6:1 LORD, don't be angry and rebuke me! Don't punish me in your anger!

Psa 6:2 I am worn out, O LORD; have pity on me! Give me strength; I am completely exhausted

Psa 6:3 and my whole being is deeply troubled. How long, O LORD, will you wait to help me?

Psa 6:4 Come and save me, LORD; in your mercy rescue me from death.

Psa 6:5 In the world of the dead you are not remembered; no one can praise you there.

Psa 6:6 I am worn out with grief; every night my bed is damp from my weeping; my pillow is soaked with tears.

Psa 6:7 I can hardly see; my eyes are so swollen from the weeping caused by my enemies.

Psa 6:8 Keep away from me, you evil people! The LORD hears my weeping;

Psa 6:9 he listens to my cry for help and will answer my prayer.

Psa 6:10 My enemies will know the bitter shame of defeat; in sudden confusion they will be driven away.

Psalms 6:1-10

Psalms 6 – A Confident Answer to an Agonized Plea

*Psalms 6 is known as the first of the seven penitential psalms – songs of confession and humility before God. It was a custom among some in the early church to sing these psalms on Ash Wednesday, 40 days before Resurrection Sunday. The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. On an eight-stringed harp. A Psalm of David.** The title tells us the recipient of the psalm – **the Chief Musician**, whom some suppose to be the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). Not only was it written for **stringed instruments**, but specifically for the **eight-stringed harp**.*

A. The agonized plea.

1. (1) *A plea to lighten the chastening hand.*

**O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure.**

a. **Do not rebuke me in Your anger:** We don't know what the occasion of this song was, but because of his sin David sensed he was under the **rebuke** of God. Therefore, he called out to God to lighten the chastisement.

i. There may be times when we *believe* we are chastened by God's hand when really, we suffer

trouble brought upon ourselves. Nevertheless, there are certainly times when the LORD does **chasten** His children.

b. **Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure:** We know that God's chastening hand is not primarily a mark of His **displeasure**, but rather it is a mark of adoption. Heb 12:7 makes it clear that chastening is evidence of our adoption: *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?* When God corrects us it doesn't feel pleasant, but it is good and it is for our good.

i. **Anger...hot displeasure:** Living before the finished work of Jesus, David had less certainty about his standing with God. On this side of the cross, we know that all the **anger** God has toward the believer was poured out on Jesus at the cross. God chastens the believer out of correcting love and not out of **anger**.

2. (2-3) *Two kinds of trouble.*

**Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I *am* weak;
O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled.
My soul also is greatly troubled;
But You, O LORD—how long?**

a. **I am weak...my bones are troubled:** David knew the trial of physical weakness and pain. In the midst of this kind of chastisement, he cried out to God for **mercy**.

i. "So we may pray that the chastisements of our gracious God, if they may not be entirely removed, may at least be sweetened by the consciousness that they are 'not in anger, but in his dear covenant love.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **My soul also is greatly troubled:** David knew the trials of spiritual weakness and pain. The difficulty of

these trials drove David to seek mercy from God.

i. These trials of body and soul were amplified by David's sense of God's anger against him. When we are not confident in God's love and assistance, even small trials feel unbearable.

c. **How long?** David sensed he was under the chastisement of God, but he still knew he should ask God to shorten the trial. There is a place for humble resignation to chastisement, but God wants us to yearn for higher ground and to use that yearning as a motivation to seek Him and get things right with Him.

i. David seems to smart under the *result* of his sin, more than the sin itself. Ideally, we are all terribly grieved by sin itself, but there is something to be said for confession and humility for the sake of the result of our sins.

3. (4-5) *The urgency of David's plea.*

Return, O LORD, deliver me!

Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!

For in death *there is* no remembrance of You;

In the grave who will give You thanks?

a. **Return, O LORD, deliver me:** In his agony David pleads for deliverance – but on the ground of God's mercy, not his own righteousness. David knew that the LORD's chastisement was righteous, but he also knew that God is rich in mercy.

i. The plea "**return**" also shows that David felt *distant* from God. This was part of the agony of the trial. When we sense that God is near us, we feel that we can face anything. But when we sense that He is distant from us, we feel weak before the smallest trial.

b. **Save me for Your mercies' sake:** The note of confession of sin is not strong in this psalm of penitence, but it is not absent. The fact that David appealed to the mercy of God for deliverance was evidence that he was aware that he did not *deserve* it.

i. "David's conscience is uneasy, and he must appeal to grace to temper the discipline he deserves."
(Kidner)

c. **In death there is no remembrance of You:** It would be wrong to take these agonized words of David as evidence that there is no life beyond this life. The Old Testament has a shadowy understanding of the world beyond. Sometimes it shows a clear confidence (Job 19:25), and sometimes it has the uncertainty David shows here.

i. "Churchyards are silent places; the vaults of the sepulcher echo not with songs. Damp earth covers silent mouths." (Spurgeon)

ii. 2Ti 1:10 says that Jesus *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. The understanding of the afterlife was murky at best in the Old Testament, but Jesus let us know more about heaven and hell than anyone else could. Jesus could do this, because He had first-hand knowledge of the world beyond.

iii. David's point wasn't to present a comprehensive theology of the world beyond. He was in agony, fearing for his life, and he *knew* he could remember God and give Him thanks now. He didn't have the same certainty about the world beyond, so he asked God to act according to his certainty.

iv. "At rare moments the Psalms have glimpses of rescue from Sheol, in terms that suggest

resurrection, or a translation like that of Enoch or Elijah (c.f. 16:10; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24)." (Kidner)

B. The determined resolution.

1. (6-7) *A vivid description of David's agony.*

**I am weary with my groaning;
All night I make my bed swim;
I drench my couch with my tears.
My eye wastes away because of grief;
It grows old because of all my enemies.**

a. **I am weary with groaning:** God's chastising hand was heavy upon David. His life seemed to be nothing but tears and misery. David's trial had at least three components.

- David felt God was angry with him.
- David lacked a sense of God's presence.
- David couldn't sleep.

b. **All night I make my bed swim:** This is a good example of poetic exaggeration. David didn't want us to believe that his bed actually floated on a pool of tears in his room. Because this is poetic literature, we understand it according to its literary context. This is how we understand the Bible *literally* – according to its literary context.

c. **My eye wastes away:** David's eyes were red and sore from all the tears and lack of sleep.

i. "As an old man's eye grows dim with years, so says David, my eye is grown red and feeble through weeping." (Spurgeon)

d. **Because of all my enemies:** David was brought so low that the presence of his enemies no longer prompted

him to seize the victory. At this point, David seemed depressed and discouraged.

2. (8-10) David's confident declaration.

**Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity;
For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.
The LORD has heard my supplication;
The LORD will receive my prayer.
Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled;
Let them turn back *and* be ashamed suddenly.**

a. **Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity:** It may be that the sin that led David into this chastisement was association with the ungodly. Here we see David acting consistently with his change of heart and telling all ungodly associates to **depart**.

i. It is important to separate from ungodly associations. J. Edwin Orr describes some of the work among new converts in Halifax during the Second Great Awakening in Britain: "Among them was a boxer who had just won a money-prize and a belt. A crowd of his erstwhile companions stood outside the hall in order to ridicule him, and they hailed the converted boxer with a shout: 'He's getting converted! What about the belt? He'll either have to fight for it or give it up!' The boxer retorted, 'I'll both give it up and you up! If you won't go with me to heaven, I won't go with you to hell!' He gave them the belt but persuaded some of them to accompany him to the services, where another was converted and set busily working."

b. **The LORD has heard the voice of my weeping:** David ended the psalm on a note of confidence. He made his agonized cry to God, and God heard him.

i. **Weeping** has a **voice** before God. It isn't that God is impressed by emotional displays, but a passionate heart impresses Him. David wasn't afraid to cry before the LORD, and God honored the **voice** of his **weeping**.

ii. "Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail! Let us learn to think of tears as liquid prayers." (Spurgeon)

iii. Once Luther wrestled hard with God in prayer and came jumping out of his prayer closet crying out, "*Vicimus, vicimus*" – that is, "Victory, victory!" David had the same sense of prevailing with God at the end of this prayer.

c. **Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled:** David knew that when God heard and answered his prayer, it would be trouble for his enemy. David now saw that his *temporary* agony and trouble gave way to a *permanent* agony and trouble for his enemies.

In You Do I Take Refuge

Psa 7:1 O LORD, my God, I come to you for protection; rescue me and save me from all who pursue me,

Psa 7:2 or else like a lion they will carry me off where no one can save me, and there they will tear me to pieces.

Psa 7:3 (3-4) O LORD, my God, if I have wronged anyone, if I have betrayed a friend or without cause done violence to my enemy—if I have done any of these things—

Psa 7:5 then let my enemies pursue me and catch me, let them cut me down and kill me and leave me lifeless on the ground!

Psa 7:6 Rise in your anger, O LORD! Stand up against the fury of my enemies; rouse yourself and help me! Justice is what you demand,

Psa 7:7 so bring together all the peoples around you, and rule over them from above.

Psa 7:8 You are the judge of all people. Judge in my favor, O LORD; you know that I am innocent.

Psa 7:9 You are a righteous God and judge our thoughts and desires. Stop the wickedness of evildoers and reward those who are good.

Psa 7:10 God is my protector; he saves those who obey him.

Psa 7:11 God is a righteous judge and always condemns the wicked.

Psa 7:12 If they do not change their ways, God will sharpen his sword. He bends his bow and makes it ready;

Psa 7:13 he takes up his deadly weapons and aims his burning arrows.

Psa 7:14 See how wicked people think up evil; they plan trouble and practice deception.

Psa 7:15 But in the traps they set for others, they themselves get caught.

Psa 7:16 So they are punished by their own evil and are hurt by their own violence.

Psa 7:17 I thank the LORD for his justice; I sing praises to the LORD, the Most High.

Psalms 7:1-17

Psalms 7 – Confidence in God’s Deliverance

*The Hebrew title to this psalm reads: **A Meditation of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.** The New King James Version translates the Hebrew word “shiggaion” as **meditation**, though the word is difficult to translate and is used elsewhere only in Hab 3:1. The specific occasion is not easily connected with an event recorded in the historical*

*books of the Old Testament; it may be a veiled reference to either Shimei's accusations against David in 2Sa 16:5 or to Saul's slanders against David. More likely this **Cush, a Benjamite**, was simply another partisan of Saul against David. The psalm contains both David's cry of anguish and shout of confidence in God's deliverance.*

A. David pleads for deliverance.

1. (1-2) A trust-filled plea.

**O LORD my God, in You I put my trust;
Save me from all those who persecute me;
And deliver me,
Lest they tear me like a lion,
Rending *me* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.**

a. **In You I put my trust:** When David was under attack from Cush the Benjamite, all he could trust was God. Every other support was gone, but he needed no other support.

i. "Nothing is known of *Cush*; but from Absalom's rebellion it emerged that Benjamin, Saul's tribe, held some bitter enemies of David (2Sa 16:5 ff; 2Sa 20:1 ff)." (Kidner)

ii. "It is easy to understand how the slander described in the psalm could have emerged from the smoldering hostility of this tribe." (Boice)

iii. Some believe that this **Cush** was really Saul or Shimei. "Cush has been supposed to be Shimei or Saul himself, and to have been so called because of his swarthy complexion (Cush meaning African) or as a jest, because of his personal beauty." (Maclaren)

b. **And deliver me:** Sometimes God's strength is evident in helping through a trial. Other times it is evident in delivering us from trials. David was persuaded that God wanted to deliver him from this trial.

i. To be slandered is a severe trial. "It appears probable that Cush the Benjamite had accused David to Saul of treasonable conspiracy against his royal authority. This the king would be ready enough to credit, both from his jealousy of David, and from the relation which most probably existed between himself, the son of Kish, and this Cush, or Kish, the Benjamite.... This may be called the SONG OF THE SLANDERED SAINT." (Spurgeon)

c. **Lest they tear me like a lion:** David believed there would be grave consequences if he were not delivered from these lion-like enemies.

i. This understanding gave David urgency in prayer. God sometimes allows difficult circumstances, so they will awaken this urgency in us.

ii. "It will be well for us here to remember that this is a description of the danger to which the Psalmist was exposed from slanderous tongues. Verily this is not an overdrawn picture, for the wounds of a sword will heal, but the wounds of the tongue cut deeper than the flesh, and are not soon cured." (Spurgeon)

iii. David also knew what it was like to overcome a lion. "The metaphor of the lion is common in the psalms attributed to David, and is, at all events, natural in the mouth of a shepherd king, who had taken a lion by the beard." (Maclaren)

2. (3-5) *The plea of innocence.*

**O LORD my God, if I have done this:
If there is iniquity in my hands,
If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with
me,
Or have plundered my enemy without cause,
Let the enemy pursue me and overtake *me* ;**

**Yes, let him trample my life to the earth,
And lay my honor in the dust. Selah**

a. **If there is iniquity in my hands:** With these words, David did not claim sinless perfection. Instead, he simply rejected the idea of moral equivalence between himself and his enemies.

i. "Although David expresses himself as perhaps we would not, his words do not mean that he is perfect, only that he is innocent of the crime of which he was charged... The question is not whether David was morally perfect but whether he was innocent of this particular slander." (Boice)

ii. "From the Psalm we learn the nature of the charges, which he made against David. They were: that he had appropriated spoils which rightly belonged to the king; that he had returned evil for good; and that he had taken toll for some generosity." (Morgan)

b. **Let the enemy pursue me and overtake me:** David knew that his enemies were thirsty for his defeat. He was so confident in his righteousness in comparison to his enemies that he was willing to be given over to their desire if they were in the right.

B. The righteous judgment of God.

1. (6-7) A plea for God's righteous intervention.

Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;

Lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies;

Rise up for me to the judgment You have commanded!

So the congregation of the peoples shall surround You;

For their sakes, therefore, return on high.

a. **Arise, O LORD, in Your anger:** David believed that God was a being of human-like passions such as **anger**.

David also believed that the passions of God were on his behalf; he believed God was or would be angry *for* him instead of *against* him.

i. It is a mistake to believe that God is without passions. Because He is God, we can say that these passions are not exactly like their human counterparts; yet they are certainly somewhat like them. God is not cold, distant, and dispassionate.

ii. Yet it is also a mistake to assume that the passions of God are always with us or support our opinion. Many dangerous fanatics have been wrongly inspired by the mistaken assurance that God was for them when He was not.

b. **Lift Yourself up...rise up for me:** David believed that God was for him and his cause; yet he did not hold this belief passively. He actively prayed for the accomplishing of what he believed God's will to be.

c. **For their sakes, therefore, return on high:** David's prayer for protection and vindication was not fundamentally selfish. He knew that his fate was vitally connected to the welfare of God's people. It was in large measure for their sakes, the sake of the congregation.

2. (8-10) *David's defense.*

**The LORD shall judge the peoples;
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And according to my integrity within me.
Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,
But establish the just;
For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.
My defense *is* of God,
Who saves the upright in heart.**

a. **The LORD shall judge the peoples; judge me, O LORD:** This was the attitude that protected David from

presumption. He honestly invited God's judgment and correction.

i. Therefore, David asked for God's blessing **according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me.** In effect he prayed, "Lord, to the extent that I am righteous before You, bless me and protect me from my enemies."

ii. When David longed for justice, it wasn't that He wanted ultimate and perfect judgment before God; he looked for justice on the earthly level, justice between him and his false accuser.

b. **Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just:** This reveals more of the heart of David's prayer. More than anything, he prayed for God to be just. David did not pray for special favoritism with God; he prayed for God to be just, and he searched his own heart to help put him right before God.

i. David seemed to pray here beyond his own personal needs. "There is a great breadth of vision here, revealing a concern for universal justice which was always the motive behind David's personal appeals for vindication." (Kidner)

c. **My defense is of God:** David knew he was at a significant disadvantage before his enemies and had to rely on the defense that is of God.

i. With his trust in God, David did "Throw off slanders, as Paul did the viper; yea, in a holy scorning... laughs at them." (Trapp)

3. (11-13) *God, the just judge.*

**God is a just judge,
And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.
If he does not turn back,**

**He will sharpen His sword;
He bends His bow and makes it ready.
He also prepares for Himself instruments of death;
He makes His arrows into fiery shafts.**

a. **God is a just judge:** David's prior appeal to God's testing of man (Psa 7:9) made him think of the justice of God. He declared this fundamental principle: **God is a just judge.**

i. This is a commonly and dangerously rejected truth about God. Many anticipate that they will one day stand before a God of great love, great mercy, great warmth, and great generosity. They never imagine they will stand before a God who is perfectly **just** and who cannot ignore the crime of sin.

ii. We can say that sin is a crime – that it breaks the good and holy law of God. And while all sins are not equally sinful (some sins are worse than others and will receive a greater condemnation, Mat 23:14), there are no small sins against a great God.

iii. The justice of God is easy to understand if we simply compare it to what we expect from an earthly judge. We don't think it is right or good if a human judge excuses crime in the name of compassion; we expect judges to be just. Yet many are absolutely confident that God will be an unjust judge on the Day of Judgment. They are so confident of it that they mistakenly rely on this idea for their salvation. David knew the truth: **God is a just judge.**

b. **He is angry with the wicked every day:** Adam Clarke believed a more accurate translation of Psa 7:11 was, "He is NOT angry every day." He writes: "The mass of evidence supports the latter reading. The *Chaldee* first corrupted the text by making the addition, *with the wicked*, which our translators have followed."

i. If the original is taken as more correct, "The sense seems to be, that there are daily instances in the world of God's favour toward his people; as also of his displeasure against the ungodly, who are frequently visited by sore judgments, and taken away in their sins." (Horne)

c. **He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready:** David here considered the readiness of God to judge the sinner. David saw the **sword** sharpened and the **bow** bent. With God so ready to judge, the sinner should never presume that God will delay His judgment.

i. When God delays judgment out of mercy, many people make a fatal error. They think this mercy means that God is not concerned with justice.

ii. Instead, one should ask: "Why does God hold back the immediate application of justice?" Is it because:

- The sinner is not really guilty?
- The Law is not really clear?
- Mankind, in fact, really deserves such mercy?
- God is not really powerful enough to bring justice?
- God is not really just?

iii. None of these are true. Instead, the **sword** is sharpened and the **bow** is bent. The only thing that holds back the immediate judgment of God against the sinner is the undeserved mercy of God, giving the sinner an unknown period of time to repent. Such mercy should never be presumed upon. "Did I say, *he will do it?* Nay, *he hath* already done it; his sword is drawn, his bow is bent, and the arrows are prepared and ready to be shot." (Poole)

iv. The real reason for any apparent delay in God's judgment is found in the line, **if he does not turn back**. In His great mercy, God waits for the sinner to **turn back**, to repent. The apparent delay is an expression of God's love for the sinner.

d. **Instruments of death...arrows into fiery shafts:**

This powerful poetic imagery communicates the severity of God's judgment, hopefully providing another incentive to repentance.

i. "The wrath of God may be slow, but it is always sure. In thoughtless security man wantons and whiles away the precious hours; he knows not that every transgression sets a fresh edge on the sword, which is thus continually whetting for his destruction." (Horne)

C. The resolution of the matter.

1. (14) *The wickedness of the wicked.*

Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity;

Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood.

a. **Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity:** This seemingly obvious statement is important. It shows that a wicked heart will show itself in wicked deeds.

i. Those wicked deeds may have the cover of respectability but will nonetheless be filled with iniquity (as was the case with the Pharisees of Jesus' day).

b. **He conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood:**

This shows the source of sin – from within the sinner. The sinner **conceives** and gives birth to sin as a mother gives birth to children – from within.

2. (15-16) *God deals with the wicked.*

He made a pit and dug it out,

And has fallen into the ditch *which* he made.

**His trouble shall return upon his own head,
And his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.**

a. **Fallen into the ditch which he made:** This shows a common method of God's distribution of justice. He often brings the same calamity on the wicked that they had planned for the righteous.

i. "God is righteous. The way of wickedness cannot prosper. It creates its own destruction. The pit digged is the grave of the man who digs it." (Morgan)

ii. "This is but the highly metaphorical way of saying that a sinner never does what he means to do, but that at the end of all his plans is disappointment." (Maclaren)

b. **His violent dealing shall come down on his own crown:** Two examples of this among many in the Bible are the fate of Haman the enemy of Mordecai and the Jews (Est 7:7-10), and the enemies of Daniel in the lion's den (Dan 6:24).

3. (17) *The response of praise.*

**I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness,
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.**

a. **I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness:** David was wise enough to praise God according to His righteousness and not his own.

i. Though David appealed to God in this psalm on the basis of his comparative goodness, this was not a self-righteous prayer. David knew the difference between his relative righteousness and God's praiseworthy, perfect righteousness.

b. And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High: David ended this psalm – which began in gloom – on a high note of praise. He could praise, because he took his cause to God and in faith left it there.

How Majestic Is Your Name

Psa 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world! Your praise reaches up to the heavens;

Psa 8:2 it is sung by children and babies. You are safe and secure from all your enemies; you stop anyone who opposes you.

Psa 8:3 When I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places—

Psa 8:4 what are human beings, that you think of them; mere mortals, that you care for them?

Psa 8:5 Yet you made them inferior only to yourself; you crowned them with glory and honor.

Psa 8:6 You appointed them rulers over everything you made; you placed them over all creation:

Psa 8:7 sheep and cattle, and the wild animals too;

Psa 8:8 the birds and the fish and the creatures in the seas.

Psa 8:9 O LORD, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world!

Psalms 8:1-9

Psalms 8 – The Glory of God in Creation

*The title of this psalm reads, **To the Chief Musician. On the instrument of Gath. A Psalm of David.** It indicates the audience of the psalm (**the Chief Musician**), the author of the psalm (of **David**) and the sound of the psalm (**the instrument of Gath**). In this psalm David speaks of the*

glory of God, and how the glory of man and his destiny reflect upon God.

A. The plainly seen glory of creation.

1. (1) The glory of God in the earth and the heavens.

**O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!**

a. **O LORD, our Lord:** Here, David recognized both the covenant *name* of God (**LORD**) and the position of Yahweh to His people (**Lord**). It was a simple, straightforward, and common way to say that "Our God is our Master."

i. "*Yehovah Adoneynu; O Jehovah our Prop, our Stay, our Support....* The root *dan* signifies *to direct, rule, judge, support*. So *Adonai* is the Director, Ruler, Judge, Supporter of men." (Clarke)

b. **How excellent is Your name in all the earth:** David also recognized that though the LORD was Israel's covenant God, He was also God of more than just Israel. His name is **excellent...in all the earth**.

c. **Who have set Your glory above the heavens:** At the same time, the **earth** was not enough to measure the glory and excellence of God. His glory is **above the heavens**.

2. (2) The glory of God in His strength over His enemies.

**Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
You have ordained strength,
Because of Your enemies,
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.**

a. **Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength:** In the first verse, David considered the greatness of God by His evident power

and glory in creation, both across the earth and in the heavens. Now, he considers that the power and glory of God can be seen in small children – **babes and nursing infants** – as God’s **strength** is evident in them.

i. David here touched on a familiar theme in the Bible: the idea that God uses otherwise weak things to display His glory and strength. 1Co 1:27 is an example of this idea: *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.*

ii. It is hard to think of anything more weak and helpless than a baby; yet the same God who can ordain strength **out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants** can give strength and support to me in the midst of my weakness.

iii. “The word here rather means *a strength*...that, out of such frail material as children’s speech, God builds a tower of strength, which, like some border castle, will bridle and still the restless enemy.” (Maclaren)

iv. “The praises of the Messiah, celebrated in the church by his children, have in them a strength and power which nothing can withstand; they can abash infidelity, when at its greatest height, and strike hell itself silent.” (Horne)

v. Significantly, Jesus quoted this passage to His indignant accusers in Mat 21:16, as Jesus did wonderful miracles in the temple area, and as He received the praise of children who cried out *Hosanna to the Son of David!* (Mat 21:15).

b. Because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy: The reason *why* God displays His strength

in unlikely vessels is because it works to **silence the enemy**; Satan and his fellow adversaries have nothing to say when God works so mightily in an otherwise weak person.

i. One dramatic example of this is the story of Job. In it, God silenced the accusations of Satan against both God and Job by the way that He sustained Job with His unseen hand in the midst of profound weakness.

ii. In quoting this passage in Mat 21:15-16, Jesus told His accusers who *He* was and who *they* were. Since the **babes and nursing infants** praise God in Psalms 8, Jesus identified Himself as God. In this, Jesus also identified the indignant scribes and teachers as the **enemy and avenger** described in this psalm.

iii. "Aha! Aha! O adversary! To be overcome by behemoth or leviathan might make thee angry; but to be smitten out of infants' mouths causes thee to bite the dust in utter dishonor. Thou art sore broken, now that 'out of the mouth of babes and sucklings' thou art put to shame." (Spurgeon)

B. The surprising glory of mankind.

1. (3-5) Though seemingly insignificant, man is crowned with glory and honor.

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,

The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

What is man that You are mindful of him,

And the son of man that You visit him?

For You have made him a little lower than the angels,

And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

a. **When I consider Your heavens:** David knew the value of simply *considering* the glory of God's creation.

He knew what it was like to look up into the starry sky and **consider** what a great God had made this vast, wonderful universe.

i. With the naked eye, one can see about 5,000 stars. With a four-inch telescope, one can see about 2 million stars. With a 200-inch mirror of a great observatory, one can see more than a billion stars. The universe is so big that if one were to travel at the speed of light, it would take 40 billion years to reach the edge of the universe. Considering the heavens makes us see the greatness of God.

ii. These great heavenly objects such as the **moon and the stars** are the work of God's **fingers**. "Notwithstanding the amazing magnitude of the sun, we have abundant reason to believe that some of the fixed stars are much larger: and yet we are told they are *the work of GOD'S FINGERS!* What a *hand*, to move, form, and launch these globes!" (Clarke)

b. **What is man that You are mindful of him:** Considering the greatness of the heavens also made David consider the relative smallness and insignificance of man. David wondered why such a big, great God would be **mindful** of such small beings.

i. "We gave you but a feeble image of our comparative insignificance, when we said that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf, than the glories of an extended universe would suffer though the globe we tread upon, and all that it inherits, should dissolve." (Chalmers, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. God is so big that He makes the universe with His fingers; man is so small that he is dwarfed by the universe. Yet David did not doubt that God was **mindful** of man; he simply said "**You are**

mindful of him" and only wondered *why*. Before we share David's question, we should first share his assured confidence that *God is mindful of us*; He thinks of us and considers what we do.

iii. "Sorry, sickly man, a mass of mortalities, a map of miseries, a mixture or compound of dirt and sin...and yet God is mindful of him." (Trapp)

iv. "David's question can be asked with many nuances. In Psa 144:3-4 it mocks the arrogance of the rebel; in Job 7:17 it is a sufferer's plea for respite; in Job 25:6 it shudders at human sin. But here it has no tinge of pessimism; only astonishment that *thou are mindful* and *thou dost care*." (Kidner)

c. **And the son of man that You should visit him:** Indeed, using the poetic method of repetition, David repeated the idea in a stronger way. **Son of man** is a title that emphasizes the "humanness" of man, and we might say that **visit him** is yet stronger than **are mindful of him**.

i. David was confident that God not only carefully thought about man, but that He had some kind of personal connection and contact with men (**that You visit him**). He thinks about us and acts in our lives.

ii. Morgan considered the use of the terms **man** and **son of man** as a "contrast between the stately splendor of the moon and the stars, and man – *Enosh* – frail man – and the son of man *Ben-Adam* – of apparently earthly origin. The contrasts are graphic." (Morgan)

d. **For You have made him a little lower than the angels:** David saw that God made man **a little lower than the angels**, and this is evident in the way that

man is beneath the angels in present glory, power, and nearness to God.

i. The word translated **angels** is *Elohim*, and most often refers to God Himself. There are some (such as Boice) who believe that David meant to say that man is a *little lower than God*, stressing the idea that man is made in God's image.

ii. Yet the ancient translators of the Bible from Hebrew to Greek understood *elohim* here to speak of angelic beings; more importantly, that was how the writer to the Hebrews understood it. "The Hebrew for [**angels**] is simply 'God' or 'gods' ('Elohim'). It may refer to angelic beings." (VanGemeren)

iii. Significantly, David did not say that man was "a little higher than the beasts," though one could say that is true. Theologians since Thomas Aquinas have noted that man is in a middle position between the angels and the animals: lower than the angels yet higher than the animals. Yet David rightly makes us look upward and not downward, though many think of mankind as more animal than angelic, David wrote that **You have made him a little lower than the angels.**

iv. "Although made in God's image and ordained to become increasingly like the God to whom they look, men and women have turned their backs on God. And since they will not look upward to God, which is their privilege and duty, they actually look downward to the beasts and so become increasingly like them." (Boice)

v. This very passage is quoted in Heb 2:5-9 to reinforce and build upon this exact point. In it he notes that man's low estate relates only to this world, and not the world to come (Heb 2:5). More pointedly,

the writer of Hebrews used this passage from Psalms 8 to show that Jesus really did add a genuinely *human* nature to His divine nature and thus also became **a little lower than the angels**.

e. **You have crowned him with glory and honor:**

Though for a **little** while set lower than the angels, man's destiny is one day to be **crowned** with a **glory and honor** that surpasses even the angels. It is the destiny of redeemed men and women to one day be lifted above the angels (

1Co 6:3, Rev 1:6; Rev 5:10).

i. "*Little* can sometimes mean 'for a little while' in both Hebrew and Greek, which is the sense probably implied in [Hebrews]." (Kidner)

ii. "A little lower in nature, since they are immortal, and but a little, because time is short; and when that is over, saints are no longer lower than the angels." (Spurgeon)

iii. God's glory is *above the heavens*; yet He put this same **glory and honor** on man as a crown. "This is an effective way of identifying man with God and of saying that he has been made in God's image, reflecting God's glory in a way other parts of the creation do not." (Boice)

iv. As the writer of Hebrews points out, it seems that this divine call and gift given to man of great dominion over the whole earth is tragically unfulfilled; fallen man seems so weak and incapable of dominion over his own thoughts and desires, much less crowned with glory and honor. Yet, as Hebrews properly says, *but we see Jesus* (Hebrew 2:9).

v. "In Him we have had the full revelation of the greatness of man. But we have seen more than that.

We have seen Him 'crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man.' That vision creates our confidence that man will at last realize the Divine purpose." (Morgan)

vi. "Satan is no doubt filled with scorn of man when he looks at him and measures him with himself. 'Is this the creature that is to be set over all the works of God's hands, made of earth and water, phosphates and metals? I am nobler far than he. Can I not flash like lightning, while he must creep about the world to find himself a grave?'" (Spurgeon)

2. (6-9) The dominion of man and the excellence of God.

You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;

You have put all *things* under his feet,

All sheep and oxen –

Even the beasts of the field,

The birds of the air,

And the fish of the sea

That pass through the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord,

How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth!

a. **You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands:** David understood the mandate given to Adam and His descendants at creation (Gen 1:26-28; Gen 9:2). By both God's decree and through superior ability, man indeed has **dominion** over the other creatures and resources of the earth.

i. "In this section of the psalm, allusions to the first chapter of Genesis are inescapable, which shows that David was thoroughly acquainted with this book." (Boice) Perhaps this knowledge of God's word came from David's mother, whom he twice in Psalms refers

to as a *maidservant* of the LORD (Psa 86:16; Psa 116:16).

ii. As part of this authority, mankind has the responsibility to wisely manage the creatures and resources of this earth in a way that gives God glory and is good for man. It means that it is wrong to see man as *merely* part of the ecosystem (thus denying his God-ordained **dominion**). It is also wrong for man to abuse the ecosystem, thus making him a bad manager of that which ultimately belongs to God (Psa 24:1). The mandate of **dominion** asks man to use the creatures and resources of the earth, but to use them wisely and responsibly.

b. **You have put all things under his feet:** Here, David developed the idea introduced in the first line of Psa 8:6. The **dominion** of man extends to **all things**, including **sheep, oxen...beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea**.

i. The Apostle Paul quoted this passage in 1Co 15:27. Paul quoted it in much the same way that the writer of Hebrews did in Heb 2:5-9, showing that this promise of dominion is now only incompletely fulfilled among men. Yet it will be ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, the ultimate Man, and will be one day also completely fulfilled in His resurrected followers.

ii. In light of all this, it is a great tragedy when a man is captured and held in bondage by the things of this world. We were born to have **dominion over** such material things, instead of being in bondage to them.

c. **O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth:** When David thought about how vast a dominion God had given to man, it made him praise God all over again. That this humble creature – humble in light of the majesty of the universe, humble in light of its

present standing under angelic beings – should be given such authority is a demonstration of both the excellence and the goodness of God.

i. David understood that the position of man in creation says far more about the glory of God than saying anything about the glory of man. Understanding it all should make us praise God, not man. "For man's dominion over nature, wonderful though it is, takes second place to his calling as servant and worshipper, to whose very children the *name* of the Lord has been revealed." (Kidner)

ii. There are three wonderful and important truths about man found in this psalm; when these truths are denied or neglected, man never is what God made him to be.

- God made man.
- God made man something glorious.
- God made man for a high and worthy destiny.

iii. All three of these principles are rooted in *what God has made man*; they do not exist nor are they fulfilled from the plan or work of man. That is why this glorious psalm about man is even more so a psalm about God. "The most striking feature of Psalms 8...is its description of man and his place in the created order. But the psalm does not begin by talking about man. It begins with a celebration of the surpassing majesty of God." (Boice)

iv. "He made us to have dominion by the word of creation. He made us kings unto God by his blood. His name shall, therefore, be honoured through all the earth." (Meyer)

v. "Even thou, silly worm, shalt honour him, when it shall appear what God hath done for thee, what lusts

he hath mortified, and what graces he hath granted thee.” (Spurgeon)

I Will Recount Your Wonderful Deeds

Psa 9:1 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the wonderful things you have done.

Psa 9:2 I will sing with joy because of you. I will sing praise to you, Almighty God.

Psa 9:3 My enemies turn back when you appear; they fall down and die.

Psa 9:4 You are fair and honest in your judgments, and you have judged in my favor.

Psa 9:5 You have condemned the heathen and destroyed the wicked; they will be remembered no more.

Psa 9:6 Our enemies are finished forever; you have destroyed their cities, and they are completely forgotten.

Psa 9:7 But the LORD is king forever; he has set up his throne for judgment.

Psa 9:8 He rules the world with righteousness; he judges the nations with justice.

Psa 9:9 The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a place of safety in times of trouble.

Psa 9:10 Those who know you, LORD, will trust you; you do not abandon anyone who comes to you.

Psa 9:11 Sing praise to the LORD, who rules in Zion! Tell every nation what he has done!

Psa 9:12 God remembers those who suffer; he does not forget their cry, and he punishes those who wrong them.

Psa 9:13 Be merciful to me, O LORD! See the sufferings my enemies cause me! Rescue me from death, O LORD,

Psa 9:14 that I may stand before the people of Jerusalem and tell them all the things for which I praise you. I will rejoice because you saved me.

Psa 9:15 The heathen have dug a pit and fallen in; they have been caught in their own trap.

Psa 9:16 The LORD has revealed himself by his righteous judgments, and the wicked are trapped by their own deeds.

Psa 9:17 Death is the destiny of all the wicked, of all those who reject God.

Psa 9:18 The needy will not always be neglected; the hope of the poor will not be crushed forever.

Psa 9:19 Come, LORD! Do not let anyone defy you! Bring the heathen before you and pronounce judgment on them.

Psa 9:20 Make them afraid, O LORD; make them know that they are only mortal beings.

Psalms 9:1-20

Psalms 9 – God Remembers, Man Forgets

*The title of this psalm reads **To the Chief Musician. To the tune of "Death of the Son." A Psalm of David.** The title indicates for us that David wrote this psalm to God Himself (generally regarded as the "Chief Musician") to a popularly known tune in his day (in Hebrew, Muth Labben) . In this psalm, David celebrates the help and goodness of God with a big vision for the nations.*

*While most believe the title Muth Labben refers to a tune, others suggest that it refers to an instrument upon which the song was played. Some (as in the New King James Version) associate the title with the phrase **The Death of the Son**, and apply that title as the ancient Chaldee version does: "Concerning the death of the Champion who went out between the camps," referring to Goliath. Perhaps David wrote this psalm remembering the victory over Goliath from the vantage point of many years since that triumph.*

"From this point in the Psalter up to Psalms 148 the versions differ over the numbering of the psalms, since the

LXX[Septuagint] and Vulgate, followed by the Roman church, count Psalms 9, 10 as a single poem, while the Protestant churches follow the Hebrew reckoning.” (Derek Kidner)

A. Praising God for how He deals with an enemy.

1. (1-2) *Singing praises to the God who does great things.*

I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart;

I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in You;

I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

a. **I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart:**

David recognized that God was worthy of praise with the **whole heart**. His entire being should be directed in affection toward God.

i. “Half heart is no heart.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “We do not praise God with our lips very much, if at all. And when we do, if we do, we praise him halfheartedly.... It is more often true that Christians complain of how God has been treating them, carry on excessively about their personal needs or desires, or gossip.” (Boice)

b. **I will tell of all Your marvelous works:** Here, David described an important and often neglected way to praise God – to **tell of all His marvelous works**. Simply remembering and telling the great things God has done is a wonderful way to praise Him.

i. “Christians, so called, when they meet, seldom speak about God! Why is this? Because they have nothing to say.” (Clarke)

ii. **Marvelous works:** “*Wonderful deeds* (or things) is a single Hebrew word, particularly frequent in the Psalms, used especially of the great redemptive

miracles (e.g. Psa 106:7; Psa 106:22), but also of their less obvious counterparts in daily experience (cf. Psa 71:17), and of the hidden glories of Scripture (Psa 119:18).” (Kidner)

iii. David could see that “Today is as full of God to this man as the sacred yesterdays of national history, and his deliverances as wonderful as those of old.” (Maclaren)

c. **I will be glad and rejoice in You:** David here described a second way to praise God, by simply finding and expressing gladness and joy **in** God. This is simply choosing to rest in and celebrate the goodness, greatness, and kindness of God.

d. **I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High:** Here, David listed a third way to praise God with the **whole heart**, by *singing praise* to the **name** of God. The idea is to honor and celebrate the character and nature of God, recognizing Him as the **Most High**.

i. **O Most High:** “God was so first called by Melchizedek, upon a like occasion as here by David, Gen 14:19-20.” (Trapp)

2. (3-5) *David praises God for defending him against his enemies.*

**When my enemies turn back,
They shall fall and perish at Your presence.
For You have maintained my right and my cause;
You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.
You have rebuked the nations,
You have destroyed the wicked;
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.**

a. **When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at Your presence:** In the first two verses of this psalm, David described general reasons for praising God,

reasons that are always valid. Now, he recounted a reason more specific to his present circumstances; he praised God for the way that the Most High defeated his **enemies**.

b. For You have maintained my right and my cause:

David saw God move against his enemies by defending him on the *principle* of right and wrong in his conflict.

i. This shows us that the God of David – that is, the God of the Bible – is not dispassionate regarding right and wrong among men; He is not always neutral in human conflict. It is entirely true that men may *think* God is on their side when He is not, and that it may be that God is against *both* parties in a dispute. Nevertheless, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David could say, “**For You have maintained my right and my cause.**”

ii. Understanding this should not make us automatically claim that God is on *our* side in our battles or disputes; it should rather make us endeavor to be on *God’s side*, by rigorously conforming ourselves to His word.

c. You sat on the throne...You have rebuked the nations...You have blotted out their name forever

and ever: David saw God in action among **the nations**, righteously judging the wicked.

i. By implication, we see that David also justified and defended the righteous – that is, himself, in the present situation.

ii. “The past tenses of verses 5-8 are ‘prophetic perfects,’ a feature of the Old Testament: they describe coming events as if they have already happened, so certain is their fulfillment and so clear the vision.” (Kidner)

3. (6-8) *David celebrates the Lord's victory.*

O enemy, destructions are finished forever!
And you have destroyed cities;
Even their memory has perished.
But the LORD shall endure forever;
He has prepared His throne for judgment.
He shall judge the world in righteousness,
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in
uprightness.

a. **O enemy, destructions are finished forever:** David shifted his focus from speaking directly to the LORD to addressing the enemies whom the LORD had defeated. David assured them that their evil work of destruction would end in futility.

i. "The metaphor of a judgment-seat is exchanged for a triumphant description of the destructions fallen on the land of the enemy, in all which God alone is recognised as the actor." (Maclaren)

b. **But the LORD shall endure forever:** We might have expected David to set *himself* in contrast to the wicked; yet he was wise and humble enough to know that God would judge the wicked more for being *His own* enemies instead of David's.

c. **He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness:** David looked forward to the eventual and ultimate rule of God over all nations. This would be the perfect expression of God's righteous judgment.

i. "The psalm is a great pattern of praise on a far too much neglected level in our day. We praise God much for His mercy. That is right, but it is a good thing to recognize His righteous rule, and to praise Him for that." (Morgan)

- ii. One thousand years after David's time, the Apostle Paul quoted this line on Mars Hill: **He shall judge the world in righteousness** (Act 17:31).

B. Praising God for how He treats the oppressed.

1. (9-10) *God is a trustworthy refuge.*

**The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
A refuge in times of trouble.**

**And those who know Your name will put their trust in
You;**

**For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek
You.**

a. **The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed:** Here, David was grateful that God did more than judge the wicked; He also was a **refuge** and support for those **oppressed** by the wicked.

i. **Times of trouble:** According to Maclaren, this translates a rare word, and "occurs only here and in Psa 10:1. It means a cutting off, *i.e.*, of hope of deliverance. The notion of distress intensified to despair is conveyed."

b. **Those who know Your name will put their trust in You:** David understood that the help of God wasn't given just because God favored some and opposed others. It was because His people *have relationship* with Him (**know Your name**), they have *faith* in Him (**put their trust in You**), and they seek Him (**who seek You**).

i. It is a serious trial to the child of God to feel **forsaken** by God. There are particular times when we are likely to feel that the Lord has forsaken us.

- When we have sinned.
- When we face great trouble.

- When we have some great job to do.
- When we feel our prayers are unanswered.
- ii. Yet we can find refuge in seeking God, in knowing His name. "To 'know Thy name' is here equivalent to learning God's character as made known by His acts." (Maclaren)
- iii. "We never trust a man till we know him, and bad men are better known than trusted. Not so the Lord, for where his name is poured out as an ointment, there the virgins love him, fear him, rejoice in him, repose upon him." (Trapp)
- iv. "Men complain of their little faith: the remedy is in their own hands; let them set themselves to know God.... But for all this, you must make time. You cannot know a friend from hurried interviews, much less God. So you must steep yourself in deep, long thoughts of his nearness and his love." (Meyer)

2. (11-12) Singing praise to the God who remembers His people.

**Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion!
 Declare His deeds among the people.
 When He avenges blood, He remembers them;
 He does not forget the cry of the humble.**

a. **Sing praises to the LORD:** David exhorted others to do what he had already done in this psalm – to praise the LORD, and to **declare His deeds among the people.**

i. "Singing and preaching, as means of glorifying God, are here joined together, and it is remarkable that, connected with all revivals of gospel ministry, there has been a sudden outburst of the spirit of song. Luther's Psalms and Hymns were in all men's mouths, and in the modern revival under Wesley and

Whitfield, the strains of Charles Wesley, Cennick, Berridge, Toplady, Hart, Newton, and many others, were the outgrowth of restored piety.” (Spurgeon)

ii. David here communicated something known among those who praise God. When they praise God, it is natural for them to draw others into similar praise.

b. When He avenges blood, He remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble: David called others to praise God for the same reasons he had praised Him earlier; notably, because God is a partisan on behalf of the oppressed and the humble. God even **avenges** their **blood**.

i. Num 35:33-34 tells us that the blood of unavenged murders pollutes the earth. The blood of Abel spoke to God (Gen 4:10), and the blood of Nabal was seen by God (2Ki 9:26). God has promised to avenge blood and remember the murdered. “The designation of God as ‘making inquisition for blood’ thinks of Him as the Goel, or Avenger. To seek here means to demand back...to demand compensation or satisfaction, and this finally comes to mean to avenge or punish.” (Maclaren)

ii. It reminds us that God will remember and avenge the blood of His persecuted people. “O persecutors, there is a time a-coming, when God will make a strict enquiry after the blood of Hooper, Bradford, Latimer, Taylor, Ridley, etc. There is a time a-coming, wherein God will enquire who silenced and suspended such-and-such ministers, and who stopped the mouths of such-and-such, and who imprisoned, confined, and banished such-and-such, who were once burning and shining lights, and who were willing to spend and be spent that sinners might be saved, and that Christ might be glorified.” (Spurgeon)

3. (13-14) A plea for mercy from the God who remembers.

Have mercy on me, O LORD!

Consider my trouble from those who hate me,

You who lift me up from the gates of death,

That I may tell of all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.

I will rejoice in Your salvation.

a. **Have mercy on me, O LORD:** David had just considered that God remembered the *cry of the humble*. Now, David wanted God to remember *him* in his season of **trouble** (**consider my trouble from those who hate me**).

i. **Gates of death...Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion:** "The contrast between the gates of death and the gates of the New Jerusalem is very striking; let our songs be excited to the highest and most rapturous pitch by the double consideration of whence we are taken." (Spurgeon)

b. **That I may tell of all Your praise:** David wanted God to rescue him so that he could give God all the more **praise**, and all the more passionately to **rejoice in** God's **salvation**.

i. Again, the idea is that David has much more than his own benefit and well-being in mind. Even his deliverance is a way for God to bring more glory to Himself. David did not see his rescue as the final goal; the goal was always God's greater glory.

ii. **I will rejoice in Your salvation:** "It is a good thing for the melancholy to become a Christian; it is an unfortunate thing for the Christian to become melancholy. If there is any man in the world that has a right to have a bright, clear face and a flashing eye,

it is the man whose sins are forgiven him, and who is saved with God's salvation." (Spurgeon)

4. (15-16) *The destiny of the wicked.*

The nations have sunk down in the pit *which* they made;

In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.

The LORD is known *by* the judgment He executes;

The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.

Meditation. Selah

a. **The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made:** David understood the triumph of God to be so complete that His enemies were ensnared in the same trap they set for others. Even the best plans and efforts of those who oppose God end up serving His purpose.

i. This pattern is demonstrated again and again in the Scriptures.

- Esau and Isaac plot against the purpose of God and end up serving it.

- Joseph's brothers fight against the plan of God only to further it.

- Haman built a gallows for Mordecai the Jew, only to be executed upon it himself.

- Judas betrayed Jesus and became himself a fulfillment of prophecy.

ii. This, of course, never justifies the evil that men do; though the betrayal of Judas sent Jesus to the cross, he himself was rightly called the *son of perdition* (the one destined for destruction) for his evil work (Joh 17:12).

iii. "There is nothing that a wicked man does that is not against his own interest. He is continually doing himself harm, and takes more pains to destroy his

soul than the righteous man does to get his saved unto eternal life. This is a weighty truth; and the psalmist adds: *Higgaion; Selah*. Meditate on this; mark it well." (Clarke)

b. **The LORD is known by the judgment He executes:** The greatness of God is demonstrated by the way He can use the plans and efforts of the ungodly, while also bringing righteous **judgment** upon them.

C. Appealing to the God who judges in righteousness.

1. (17-18) *God will deal with both the wicked and the humble.*

**The wicked shall be turned into hell,
And all the nations that forget God.
For the needy shall not always be forgotten;
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish forever.**

a. **The wicked shall be turned into hell:** Here, as David approaches the conclusion of the psalm, he considered the *end* of the wicked – ultimate destruction in **hell**.

i. In the patterns of Hebraic poetry, the phrase "**and all the nations that forget God**" can be considered just another way of describing **the wicked** mentioned in the previous line. Yet it is a useful repetition, reminding us of the inherently great sin of *forgetting God*.

ii. What does the sinner forget about God?

- Man forgets the *infinite majesty and glory* of God.
- Man forgets the *mercies* of God.
- Man forgets the *laws* of God.
- Man forgets the *presence* of God.
- Man forgets the *justice* of God.

iii. Why does the sinner forget God?

- Man forgets God because *the thought of God makes him afraid.*
- Man forgets God because *the thought of God doesn't entertain him enough.*
- Man forgets God because *the thought of God makes it hard to carry on in sin.*

iv. "The forgetters of God are far more numerous than the profane or profligate, and according to the very forceful expression of the Hebrew, the nethermost hell will be the place into which all of them shall be hurled headlong. Forgetfulness seems a small sin, but it brings eternal wrath upon the man who lives and dies in it." (Spurgeon)

v. **The wicked shall be turned into hell:** "Hebrew, into into hell (twice), that is, into the nethermost hell, the lowest dungeon of hell.... R. Solomon's note here is, they shall be carried away from hell to judgment, and from judgment they shall be returned to the deepest pit of hell." (Trapp)

b. **For the needy shall not always be forgotten:** David expresses a beautiful contrast here. The wicked try to **forget God**; yet the **needy** and **poor** (here describing the godly who are oppressed by God's enemies) are **not...forgotten**.

i. **Shall not always be forgotten** reminds us that from the perception of the **needy** and **poor**, they may for a time feel forgotten. Yet the good God promises that they will not **always** feel this way, and their **expectation** will not forever be disappointed.

ii. There are few more painful things than feeling *forgotten* and feeling *disappointed*. To those in such pain, God makes these wonderful promises; that they

shall not always be forgotten, and their **expectation** will not perish.

- You shall not always be forgotten at the mercy-seat; so keep praying.
- You shall not always be forgotten in the Word; so keep reading.
- You shall not always be forgotten from the pulpit; so keep hearing.
- You shall not always be forgotten at the Lord's Table; so keep receiving.
- You shall not always be forgotten in your service; so keep serving.
- You expect to have peace in Jesus; in Him you will have it.
- You expect to triumph over sin; in Him you will triumph.
- You expect to get out of trouble; in Him you will be delivered.
- You expect to grow strong in faith; in Him you will be strengthened.
- You expect to have spiritual joys and experiences; in Him you will have them.

iii. "The needy, and the poor, whose expectation is from the Lord, are never forgotten, though sometimes their deliverance is delayed for the greater confusion of their enemies, the greater manifestation of God's mercy, and the greater benefit to themselves." (Clarke)

2. (19-20) An appeal for God to glorify Himself among the nations.

**Arise, O LORD,
Do not let man prevail;
Let the nations be judged in Your sight.
Put them in fear, O LORD,
That the nations may know themselves *to be but* men.
Selah**

a. **Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail:** Previously in this psalm, David expressed a firm confidence in God's judgment of the wicked and His vindication of the righteous. Yet David did not allow this expectation to make him *passive* or *fatalistic* in regard to the outworking of God's plan. Instead, he boldly prayed, **"Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail."**

i. "Prayers are the Church's weapons...whereby she is terrible as an army with banners; she prays down her enemies." (Trapp)

ii. "The word for *man*, in both verses, is one which tends to emphasize his frailty." (Kidner)

iii. "All the wealth of Croesus, the wisdom of Solon, the power of Alexander, the eloquence of Demosthenes, if added together, would leave the possessor but a man. May we ever remember this, lest like those in the text, we should be *put in fear*." (Spurgeon)

b. **Let the nations be judged in Your sight...that the nations may know themselves to be but men:** David again expressed his confidence in God's judgment of the wicked. Yet this did not lead David to a hatred of mankind or unhealthy joy in judgment. His real hope was that the display of God's judgment would *teach* the nations their proper place before God (**to be but men**).

i. This is a place of humility, and as David has already noted in this psalm, the humble are remembered

before God (Psa 9:12). This was a prayer for God to *reach* the nations through the display of His judgment.

ii. "Strange, that man, dust in his original, sinful by his fall, and continually reminded of both by every thing in him and about him, should yet stand in need of some sharp affliction, some severe visitation from God, to bring him the knowledge of himself, and make him feel who and what he is." (Horne)

iii. "So the two parts of the psalm end with the thought that the 'nations' may yet come to know the name of God, the one calling upon those who have experienced His deliverance to 'declare among the peoples His doings,' the other praying God to teach by chastisement what nations who forget Him have failed to learn from mercies." (Maclaren)

iv. "What prayer, then, can we pray which is of more vital importance than that the nations may know themselves to be but men? Such knowledge must drive them to dependence upon God, and such dependence is the secret of national strength, and of national prosperity and permanence." (Morgan)

Why Do You Hide Yourself?

Psa 10:1 Why are you so far away, O LORD? Why do you hide yourself when we are in trouble?

Psa 10:2 The wicked are proud and persecute the poor; catch them in the traps they have made.

Psa 10:3 The wicked are proud of their evil desires; the greedy curse and reject the LORD.

Psa 10:4 The wicked do not care about the LORD; in their pride they think that God doesn't matter.

Psa 10:5 The wicked succeed in everything. They cannot understand God's judgments; they sneer at their enemies.

Psa 10:6 They say to themselves, "We will never fail; we will never be in trouble."

Psa 10:7 Their speech is filled with curses, lies, and threats; they are quick to speak hateful, evil words.

Psa 10:8 They hide themselves in the villages, waiting to murder innocent people. They spy on their helpless victims;

Psa 10:9 they wait in their hiding place like lions. They lie in wait for the poor; they catch them in their traps and drag them away.

Psa 10:10 The helpless victims lie crushed; brute strength has defeated them.

Psa 10:11 The wicked say to themselves, "God doesn't care! He has closed his eyes and will never see me!"

Psa 10:12 O LORD, punish those wicked people! Remember those who are suffering!

Psa 10:13 How can the wicked despise God and say to themselves, "He will not punish me"?

Psa 10:14 But you do see; you take notice of trouble and suffering and are always ready to help. The helpless commit themselves to you; you have always helped the needy.

Psa 10:15 Break the power of wicked and evil people; punish them for the wrong they have done until they do it no more.

Psa 10:16 The LORD is king forever and ever. Those who worship other gods will vanish from his land.

Psa 10:17 You will listen, O LORD, to the prayers of the lowly; you will give them courage.

Psa 10:18 You will hear the cries of the oppressed and the orphans; you will judge in their favor, so that mortal men may cause terror no more.

Psalms 10:1-18

Psalms 10 – From Times of Trouble to Calm Confidence

Because this psalm has no title (in the midst of several psalms that do), and because it shares some similar themes with Psalms 9, some have thought that it was originally the second half of Psalms 9. There are more reasons to doubt this than to believe it; this psalm rightly stands on its own as a psalm of lament at the seeming prosperity of the wicked but ultimate confidence in the judgments of God.

" There is not, in my judgment, a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the works, the words, the feelings, and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fullness, and light, as this Psalm." (Martin Luther, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. Questioning the success of the wicked.

1. (1-4) Questioning the seeming inactivity of God against the wicked.

**Why do You stand afar off, O LORD?
Why do You hide in times of trouble?
The wicked in *his* pride persecutes the poor;
Let them be caught in the plots which they have
devised.
For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire;
He blesses the greedy *and* renounces the LORD.
The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek
God;
God *is* in none of his thoughts.**

a. **Why do You stand afar off, O LORD?** Here, the psalmist asked a question well known to those who follow God: the concern, the anxiety, over the seeming inactivity of God. The psalmist felt that God was **afar off** and did even **hide in times of trouble**.

i. "The presence of God is the joy of his people, but any suspicion of his absence is distracting beyond measure.... It is not the trouble, but the hiding of our Father's face, which cuts us to the quick." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Times of trouble:** According to Maclaren, this was a rare word in the ancient Hebrew vocabulary, used only here and in Psa 9:9. "It means a cutting off, *i.e.*, of hope of deliverance. The notion of distress intensified to despair is conveyed."

b. **The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor:** This explains *why* the psalmist was so troubled by the seeming inactivity of God. He sees the **wicked**, proud man who not only **persecutes the poor** and approves other sinners (**blesses the greedy**), but he also sins against God (**renounces the LORD...does not seek God...God is in none of his thoughts**).

i. We immediately recognize that anyone who **renounces the LORD** is sinful. Yet the psalmist here

puts the one who **does not seek God** and the one who does not think about God (**God is in none of his thoughts**) in the same category as the one who **renounces the LORD**.

ii. Men do not seek God; this is a great sin. Men do not think about God; this also is a great sin. Man has obligations to God as His Creator and sovereign, and it is a sin to neglect them. Man commits these sins because of **his proud countenance**; ignoring God is an expression of our independence and perceived equality (or superiority) to Him.

iii. Poole observed that pride is in the heart, "yet it is manifested in the countenance, and is therefore oft described by lofty looks."

iv. "A brazen face and a broken heart never go together.... Honesty shines in the face, but villainy peeps out at the eyes." (Spurgeon)

v. It can be said of the proud, wicked man in this psalm, **God is in none of his thoughts**. At the same time, he cannot *not* think of God, as he does later in Psa 10:11; Psa 10:13 (the thoughts, *God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see...You will not require an account*). Try as he may, he can't stop thinking about God.

c. Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised: This was the prayer of the psalmist regarding the wicked. In other psalms this is a confident expectation (such as Psa 9:15); here it is a heartfelt prayer.

i. "There are none who will dispute the justice of God, when he shall hang every Haman on his own gallows, and cast all the enemies of his Daniels into their own den of lions." (Spurgeon)

2. (5-7) *The pride of the wicked.*

**His ways are always prospering;
Your judgments *are* far above, out of his sight;
As for all his enemies, he sneers at them.
He has said in his heart, "I shall not be moved;
I shall never be in adversity."
His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression;
Under his tongue *is* trouble and iniquity.**

a. **His ways are always prospering:** Here, the psalmist protested to God; not only did the wicked man seem to enjoy constant prosperity, but he did so because God's **judgments are far above, out of his sight.**

i. We can imagine the psalmist thinking, "If only God would demonstrate His judgment to this wicked man, he would change his ways." This may sound like a complaint against God and in some sense is; yet it should more so be seen as complete confidence in God's rule and authority. The psalmist recognized that the wicked could never prosper unless God allowed it; so he appealed to God to not allow it.

b. **He sneers at them..."I shall not be moved; I shall never be in adversity"...full of cursing and deceit and oppression:** The psalmist examined and exposed the sins of the wicked man, who is not afraid of his enemies. There is pride and sin in the wicked man's **heart**, in his **mouth**, and **under his tongue**. No wonder the psalmist wanted God to stop this kind of sinner!

i. We are impressed at how often the wicked *speech* of men – which is often today regarded as no sin at all – is regarded as sin in Psalms. "Cursing, lying, threatening, and troubling and evil speech are all destructive. They flow from one who does not believe that God will hold him or her accountable." (Boice)

- ii. "Such cursing men are cursed men." (Trapp)
- iii. "What a finished character! A blasphemer, a deceitful man, and a knave!" (Clarke)
- iv. "He wants no prophet to teach him, no priest to atone for him, no king to conduct for him; he needs neither a Christ to redeem, nor a Spirit to sanctify him; he believes no Providence, adores no Creator, and fears no Judge." (Horne)

3. (8-11) *The violence and blasphemy of the wicked.*

**He sits in the lurking places of the villages;
In the secret places he murders the innocent;
His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless.
He lies in wait secretly, as a lion in his den;
He lies in wait to catch the poor;
He catches the poor when he draws him into his net.
So he crouches, he lies low,
That the helpless may fall by his strength.
He has said in his heart,
"God has forgotten;
He hides His face;
He will never see."**

a. **He sits in the lurking places of the villages:** The psalmist continued his examination of the wicked man (or men) who had troubled him so. Key to the nature of this wicked man is *secrecy* (**lurking places...secret places...eyes are secretly fixed...lies in wait secretly...he lies low**).

b. **He murders the innocent:** Another characteristic of the wicked man is seen in how he is a bully, focusing his violence against the weak (**the innocent...the helpless...the poor**). He isn't manful or honorable enough to openly fight those who might effectively fight back.

i. **The helpless:** "The pathetic state of his victims is shown in the reiterated word *hapless*, or 'poor wretch' (New English Bible), found only here (Psa 10:8; Psa 10:10; Psa 10:14)." (Kidner)

ii. "'Helpless' is a word only found in this psalm (vv. 8,10,14), which has received various explanations, but is probably derived from a root meaning *to be black*, and hence comes to mean *miserable*, *hapless*, or the like." (Maclaren)

c. **God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see:** For the psalmist, this made the murder, oppression, and bullying of the wicked man all the worse. He did it all cherishing the thought that God **has forgotten**, and would **never see** his wickedness against the poor and helpless.

i. It is common for men to think that **God has forgotten** their sins simply because it seems, to those men, that they were committed a long time ago. "Is it not a senseless thing to be careless of sins committed long ago? The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding. Time cannot raze out that which hath been known from eternity." (Stephen Charnock, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. We can fairly say that this added *blasphemy against God* to the wicked man's many sins against mankind. We can imagine the psalmist's blood boiling as he thought about this smiling, self-assured sinner and the pleasure he took in his sin.

iii. We also notice a great difference between the *pain* in the believer who fears **God has forgotten** (as in Psa 10:1), and the sinner who vainly hopes and takes false comfort in the idea that **God has forgotten**.

B. A prayer to God for protection and vindication.

1. (12-13) *A call upon God to take action.*

Arise, O LORD!

O God, lift up Your hand!

Do not forget the humble.

Why do the wicked renounce God?

He has said in his heart,

"You will not require *an account*. "

a. **Arise, O LORD:** The psalmist simply called upon God to *take action*. "LORD, this wicked man finds comfort in the idea that You won't do anything against him. **Arise, O LORD; lift up Your hand** against this wicked man!"

i. It is not stated in this untitled psalm, but it is often assumed that David wrote this psalm, because it is arranged in the midst of several psalms that are specifically attributed to David (Psalms 3-9; Psalms 11-32). Yet we know David to be a man of valiant action and warrior spirit, not the kind to stand passively back while the wicked murdered and terrorized the weak and helpless. The only exception to this would be if the wicked man were in a place of God-appointed authority, such as Saul was in Israel. Perhaps this psalm was a cry of David for *God* to stop Saul, because David knew that it was not his place to lift his hand against the LORD's anointed.

b. **Why do the wicked renounce God?** The psalmist answered his own question in the next lines. The **wicked renounce God** because they say in their **heart** that God **will not require an account**.

i. "The long-suffering of God, instead of leading such a one to repentance, only hardens him in his iniquity. Because sentence against an evil work is not

executed speedily, he thinks it will not be executed at all." (Horne)

ii. This observation has an inherent prayer: "LORD, **require an account** from this wicked man who renounces You!"

2. (14-15) Asking for God's help in view of His kindness to the helpless.

**But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief,
To repay *it* by Your hand.**

The helpless commits himself to You;

You are the helper of the fatherless.

Break the arm of the wicked and the evil *man*;

Seek out his wickedness *until* You find none.

a. **But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief:** Upon further reflection, the psalmist recognized that God *has* indeed seen, because He sees and cares about the **trouble and grief** of the poor and helpless.

b. **To repay it by Your hand:** Here is the confidence of the psalmist in God's judgments. He most certainly *will* **repay** the wicked for their sins. God will indeed answer the **helpless** and be the **helper of the fatherless**.

c. **Break the arm of the wicked and the evil man:** The psalmist called upon God to help the weak by shattering the **wicked and the evil man**, and to thoroughly **seek out his wickedness until You find none**.

3. (16-18) Confidence in God's judgments.

The LORD is King forever and ever;

The nations have perished out of His land.

LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble;

You will prepare their heart;

You will cause Your ear to hear,

**To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,
That the man of the earth may oppress no more.**

a. **The LORD is King forever and ever:** The psalmist began with almost despair in his *times of trouble*; he ends with calm confidence in the reign of the **LORD** as an eternal **King**.

i. God had long been declared the King of Israel (Exo 15:18), even when His people rejected His rule (1Sa 8:7-9). If David wrote this psalm (especially during a time of persecution from Saul), the words **the LORD is King forever and ever** would have special meaning, recognizing the reign of God even over the troubled and dysfunctional reign of Saul.

b. **The nations have perished out of His land:** Remembering the past victories of God against the cruel enemies of His people (in this case, the Canaanites who occupied **His land**) gave the psalmist greater confidence regarding the present help of the LORD.

i. "They are all either cut off or *converted*. This may refer to the *Canaanites*. What a mercy that we can say this of our own country! Once it was entirely heathen; now not one heathen family in the whole land." (Adam Clarke, speaking of his native England)

c. **You have heard the desire of the humble...You will prepare their heart...You will cause Your ear to hear:** This continues to express the calm confidence of the psalmist. God will not abandon the poor and needy, but will help and bless them.

i. "David does not say, 'Thou hast heard the *prayer* of the humble;' he means that, but he also means a great deal more. Sometimes, we have desires that we cannot express; they are too big, too deep; we cannot clothe them in language. At other times, we

have desires which we dare not express; we feel too bowed down, we see too much of our own undesert to be able to venture near the throne of God to utter our desires; but the Lord hears the desire when we cannot or dare not turn it into the actual form of a prayer." (Spurgeon)

ii. With a wonderful phrase – **You will prepare their heart** – the psalmist reminds us that the *spiritual preparation of the heart* is a great gift, an answer to prayer, and a mark of God's blessing. "Surely none but the Lord can prepare a heart for prayer. One old writer says it is far harder work to raise the big bell into the steeple than to ring it afterwards. This witness is true. When the bell is well hung you can ring it readily enough; but in that uplifting of the heart lies the work and the labor." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The 'humble' and lowly, whatever they may suffer in the world, are the favourites of Jehovah: that he attends to the very 'desires' of their hearts: that such hearts 'prepared' to prayer, are so many instruments strung and tuned by the hand of heaven." (Horne)

iv. "Where God giveth a praying heart it is sure that he will show a pitying heart. If he prepare the heart, he will also bend his ear." (Trapp)

v. "See the economy of the grace of God: 1. God *prepares the heart*; 2. *Suggests the prayer*; 3. *Hears* what is prayed; 4. *Answers* the petition. He who has got a cry in his heart after God, may rest assured that that cry proceeded from a Divine preparation, and that an answer will soon arrive. No man ever had a cry in his heart after salvation, but from God. He who continues to cry shall infallibly be heard." (Clarke)

d. **To do justice...that the man of the earth may oppress no more:** The psalmist ends with assurance of God's **justice** applied to the wicked. What began with a sense of despair in *times of trouble* has ended with calm confidence in God's **justice** and victory.

i. **The man of the earth:** "Earthly and mortal men, who are made of the dust, and must return to it, such as the oppressors of the people are." (Poole)

ii. "Under the rule of God, the day must come when, 'That man who is of the earth may be terrible no more.' These were the concluding words of the song, and they constitute a fitting answer to its opening inquiry." (Morgan)

The Lord Is in His Holy Temple

Psa 11:1 I trust in the LORD for safety. How foolish of you to say to me, "Fly away like a bird to the mountains,

Psa 11:2 because the wicked have drawn their bows and aimed their arrows to shoot from the shadows at good people.

Psa 11:3 There is nothing a good person can do when everything falls apart."

Psa 11:4 The LORD is in his holy temple; he has his throne in heaven. He watches people everywhere and knows what they are doing.

Psa 11:5 He examines the good and the wicked alike; the lawless he hates with all his heart.

Psa 11:6 He sends down flaming coals and burning sulfur on the wicked; he punishes them with scorching winds.

Psa 11:7 The LORD is righteous and loves good deeds; those who do them will live in his presence.

Psalms 11:1-7

Psalms 11 – The Answer of Faith to the Advice of Fear

*The title tells us both the author and the audience of the psalm: **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** Some believe that **the Chief Musician** is the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). This psalm records well-intentioned, but faithless advice of David's friends when he was a fugitive from King Saul. David lifted his eyes to the LORD to find faith in a time of testing. He knew the safest place to stand was in radical trust in God.*

A. The advice of fear.

1. (1) David reacts to the advice to flee.

**In the LORD I put my trust;
How can you say to my soul,
"Flee as a bird to your mountain"?**

a. **In the LORD I put my trust:** In the years before he took the throne of Israel, David lived the life of a fugitive. He was constantly hunted by King Saul and lived in constant danger. In such a time, his friends advised him, "**Flee as a bird to your mountain.**" His friends meant well, but David knew it was the wrong thing to do.

b. **How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain?"**: This expressed the near outrage in David's response to his friends. No matter how well-intentioned his friends were, they gave him the advice of fear. The advice of fear couldn't stand with the position of **trust** David had in the **LORD**.

i. "He would rather dare the danger than exhibit a distrust in the Lord his God." (Spurgeon)

2. (2-3) David remembers the words of fear in the mouths of his friends.

**For look! The wicked bend *their* bow,
They make ready their arrow on the string,**

**That they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart.
If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?**

a. **For look! The wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow on the string:** In today's language, David's friends would say, "Look! There is a loaded gun to your head, and you have to run!"

b. **For look:** The advice given to David was well-meant, but ungodly. It was like when Peter advised Jesus to not go the way of the cross (Mat 16:22-23). Peter meant well, but he was really being used by the devil.

i. We must always be careful with the advice we give to others. First, we must always mind our own business and not be busybodies (1Th 4:11, 1Ti 5:13). Second, we can be too confident in our own perception of a situation. Job's friend confidently said, "*I will tell you, hear me; what I have seen I will declare*" (Job 15:17), but he was wrong. Our motive is good and right, but the advice is wrong.

c. **That they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart:** Here, David's friends are trying to make him afraid of a secret attack. When we fear the things we can't see, we are really walking in fear!

i. David's friends may have been using an element of manipulation here. They may have reasoned like this: "Look, for his own good, we have to get David out of here. It's justified for us to exaggerate things a little bit to get him to do what is right." But it wasn't justified. Manipulation is never right, even if it is for a good cause.

d. **If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?** These words in the mouths of David's friends were meant to be a warning. The idea was, "The

very foundation of Saul's government is destroyed. What can a righteous one like you do, except flee?"

e. **What can the righteous do?** When David heard these words from his friends, his head probably told him there was something to them. But his heart told him that to heed this advice and to flee would be to compromise.

i. "He will use such plausible logic, that unless we once for all assert our immovable trust in Jehovah, he will make us like the timid bird which flies to the mountain whenever danger presents itself." (Spurgeon)

B. The answer of faith.

1. (4a) *David answers by remembering where God is.*

**The LORD is in His holy temple,
The Lord's throne is in heaven;**

a. **The LORD is in His holy temple:** Probably, David had in mind both the LORD's temple on earth (the tabernacle) and the LORD's temple in heaven. David reminded himself and his friends, "God hasn't gone anywhere. You can go to His temple and meet with Him." He may also have had the thought, "The LORD isn't going anywhere, so I won't either."

i. When the advice of fear comes upon us, we can only arrive at the answer of faith by spending time with the LORD. When we *think* about our problems, the advice of fear often overwhelms us. When we *pray* about our problems, the answer of faith assures our hearts.

ii. When we think of Jesus in the temple of heaven, we remember that He is praying for us. "What plots can men devise which Jesus will not discover? Satan has doubtless desired to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, but Jesus is in the temple praying for us, and how can our faith fail?" (Spurgeon)

b. **The LORD's throne is in heaven:** This was the source of David's confidence. It was not foolhardiness or self-reliance. Instead, David had confidence in a holy, all-powerful, all-knowing God.

i. David was asked, *What can the righteous do?* David answered with another question: "What *can't* the righteous do when the LORD God is still on His throne?"

ii. The problems were indeed bad. "But what were all these things to a man whose trust was in God alone?" (Spurgeon)

2. (4b-5) *David answers by remembering what God sees.*

**His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.
The LORD tests the righteous,
But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.**

a. **His eyes behold:** David didn't need to take the advice of fear, because God saw his situation. David had a greater cause than self-preservation, because he knew that God was looking at him and taking care of him.

b. **The LORD tests the righteous:** Again, David answered the question, *If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?* David answered, "The righteous can know that the LORD is testing them, and because a loving God is testing them, they can know they will not be pushed too far or forsaken. The righteous can know the LORD is in control."

c. **But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates:** As God sees, He is not a detached observer. He cares; He sees the **wicked** and **hates** them. David is saying, "I don't need to flee to protect myself, because God in heaven is watching me and sees how sinful the conduct of my enemies is."

3. (6) *David answers by remembering the destiny of the wicked.*

**Upon the wicked He will rain coals;
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind
Shall be the portion of their cup.**

a. **Upon the wicked He will rain coals, fire and brimstone and a burning wind:** God will punish the wicked. This gave David confidence in the midst of the advice of fear. After all, if the ungodly persecute the righteous, how much more will the righteous God persecute the ungodly?

b. **Fire and brimstone:** This gave the image of ultimate, eternal judgment. What did David have to fear from men destined for hell?

c. **This shall be the portion of their cup:** The image of the **cup** as a container of judgment reminds us of Jesus' prayer in the garden: *O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will* (Mat 26:39). The cup Jesus dreaded was the cup that contained the wrath of God against sin, wrath that we deserved, but Jesus drank for us.

4. (7) *David answers by remembering the love and favor of God.*

**For the LORD is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright.**

a. **For the LORD is righteous:** This was a comfort and encouragement to David. When we are rebelling against the LORD, His righteousness is no comfort to us. But David knew he was the innocent victim of persecution, and he knew the **righteous** LORD would take up his cause.

b. **He loves righteousness:** David knew that as he walked righteously, he would *keep* [himself] *in the love of God* (Jud 1:21). It isn't that we must earn God's love by our personal righteousness; instead, our pursuit and practice of righteousness keeps us flowing in the benefits of God's love.

i. God's love extends everywhere. Nothing can separate us from God's love, and He loved us while we were still sinners (Rom 5:8). But we can deny ourselves the benefits of God's love.

ii. People who don't keep themselves in the love of God end up living as if they are on the dark side of the moon. The sun is always out there, always shining, but they are never in a position to receive the light or warmth of the sun. They are like the Prodigal Son of Luke 15, who was always loved by the father, but for a time he did not benefit from that love.

c. **His countenance beholds the upright:** Scholars and translators debate if this means "God's upright people see Him" or "the LORD sees His upright people." Most modern translations think it speaks of God's people seeing Him: *Upright men will see his face* (NIV), *The upright will behold His face* (NASB), *The godly shall see his face* (LB). However, it really doesn't matter, because both are true.

i. God shines His face on His people. This speaks of "an eye of approbation, and true and tender affection, and watchful and gracious providence; which is oft signified by God's *beholding* or *looking* upon men." (Poole) In fact, the last line of the priestly blessing of Num 6:26 is, *The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.*

ii. God's people will see Him. *I will see Your face in righteousness (Psa 17:15). Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Mat 5:8).* In fact, the desire to behold God is one of the greatest motivations to an upright life and heart.

iii. All in all, when David considers the greatness of God, the care of God, and the vision of God, it all outweighs the danger. For David, trusting God was the safest move of all. His friends may or may not have meant well, but David would not receive their advice of fear. Instead, he would answer with faith.

The Faithful Have Vanished

Psa 12:1 Help us, LORD! There is not a good person left; honest people can no longer be found.

Psa 12:2 All of them lie to one another; they deceive each other with flattery.

Psa 12:3 Silence those flattering tongues, O LORD! Close those boastful mouths that say,

Psa 12:4 "With our words we get what we want. We will say what we wish, and no one can stop us."

Psa 12:5 "But now I will come," says the LORD, "because the needy are oppressed and the persecuted groan in pain. I will give them the security they long for."

Psa 12:6 The promises of the LORD can be trusted; they are as genuine as silver refined seven times in the furnace.

Psa 12:7 (7-8) The wicked are everywhere, and everyone praises what is evil. Keep us always safe, O LORD, and preserve us from such people.

Psalms 12:1-8

Psalms 12 – The Words of Man and the Word of God

*The title of this psalm reads, **To the Chief Musician. On an eight-stringed harp. A Psalm of David.** The title is like*

many others in this general section of psalms, simply stating the audience, the instrument, and the author of the psalm. In this psalm David complains about the vicious words of his adversaries, and in contrast praises the pure and precious word of God.

A. The problem of flattering lips.

1. (1-2) The disappearance of the godly man and his unfortunate replacement.

Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!

For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

They speak idly everyone with his neighbor;

With flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

a. **Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases:** The exact circumstances under which David wrote this psalm are unknown, and it could have been during many different periods in his life. David knew what it was like to feel that **the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.**

i. David was a warrior and a fierce soldier, but we see here that he also had to deal with the battles of gossip and the backbiting of idle and deceptive talkers. David knew what it was like to feel all alone in this kind of battle, where it seemed that no one would speak up and defend him. Instead, he took his case to the LORD. We sense that David probably would have preferred to battle with swords and shields than among the gossips and backbiters surrounding him.

b. **With flattering lips and a double heart they speak:** Instead of the **godly man**, David saw around him those who spoke with idle chatter (**they speak idly everyone with his neighbor**), and who were two-faced liars (**flattering lips...a double heart**).

i. This psalm may have come from the time in David's life when he was in the court of King Saul, but was a target for the mad jealousy of the king. We can easily imagine a vicious whispering campaign against David among those who wanted to gain favor with the misguided king.

ii. The essence of **flattering lips** is that they *say what people want to hear*. There are many such talkers today, even within the church – those who know the *right* answer for every occasion but speak with no honesty or transparency of heart. They constantly speak what people hope to hear or what is assumed to be proper instead of their true thoughts, feelings, and deeds.

iii. "Daniel says that flattery will be a tool of that wicked world ruler who will arise at the last day (Dan 11:32).\" (Boice)

iv. \"*They speak with a double heart.*\" The original is, 'A heart and a heart': one for the church, another for the change; one for Sundays, another for working-days; one for the king, another for the pope. A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster.\" (Thomas Adams, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (3-5) *A plea for God to judge those who speak wickedly.*

**May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
And the tongue that speaks proud things,
Who have said,**

**\"With our tongue we will prevail;
Our lips *are* our own;
Who *is* lord over us?\"**

\"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,

**Now I will arise," says the LORD;
"I will set *him* in the safety for which he yearns."**

a. **May the LORD cut off all flattering lips:** David felt somewhat helpless against these destructive chatterers; he found his refuge in the LORD, to whom he appealed to **cut off...the tongue that speaks proud things.**

i. Benjamin Franklin once wrote, "Since I cannot govern my own tongue, tho' within my own teeth, how can I hope to govern the tongues of others?" David felt this same frustration with the idle and destructive tongues of others.

ii. "Better to have the tongue touched with a live coal from the altar than cut out." (Maclaren)

b. **With our tongue we will prevail...Who is lord over us?** David despised these destructive tongues, not only for what they said, but also for the pride that made them so difficult to stop. It was as if they freely said, "You can never make us stop talking as we please."

i. "*With our tongues we will prevail*; by raising and spreading slanders and evil reports concerning him, whereby both Saul will be highly and implacably enraged against David, and the hearts of the people alienated from him." (Poole)

ii. For the one who professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ, there is only one answer to this question, **Who is lord over us?** Jesus Christ is our Lord, and He owns us body, soul, and spirit. We are bought with a price and are therefore obligated to glorify God in our bodies, including our **lips** and **tongue** (1Co 6:20).

c. **Now I will arise:** These destructive talkers spoke as they pleased, but they could not stop the LORD God from speaking as *He* pleased. In a wonderful and dramatic

way, the LORD announced that He would act on behalf of the **poor** and **needy** victimized by these proud, unstoppable talkers.

i. "Think of God arising in his might. When he ariseth, he shakes terribly the earth; nothing stands before him when he once arises. Poor, sick, needy, sorrowing, sighing child of God, it is you who can bring him into this marvellous state of activity."
(Spurgeon)

d. **I will set him in the safety for which he yearns:** David believed that this was God's word *for him*. He was one of the **poor** and **needy** yearning for safety from these destructive critics and talkers.

B. The words of God and the wickedness of men.

1. (6-7) *The pure words of the LORD.*

**The words of the LORD are pure words,
Like silver tried in a furnace of earth,
Purified seven times.
You shall keep them, O LORD,
You shall preserve them from this generation forever.**

a. **The words of the LORD are pure words:** In contrast to the idle, two-faced, lying, and proud lips of David's adversaries, God's words are **pure**, as if they were fine **silver...purified seven times**.

i. "What a contrast between the vain words of man, and the pure words of Jehovah. Man's words are yea and nay, but the Lord's promises are yea and amen."
(Spurgeon)

ii. "The words of Jehovah are holy in his precepts, just in his laws, gracious in his promises, significant in his institutions, true in his narrations, and infallible in his predictions. What are thousands of gold and silver

compared to the treasures of the sacred page!" (Horne)

iii. This means that the word of God can be *trusted* in every sense. It is good, pure, and tested thoroughly. We can trust that God has tested His own word; but it has also been tested by students, scholars, critics, and doubters through the centuries – and the *word of God still stands*. It is like a mighty anvil that has worn out countless hammers that have pounded upon it.

iv. "The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as alloy to precious ore. The experience of saints has tried it in every conceivable manner, but not a single doctrine or promise has been consumed in the most excessive heat." (Spurgeon)

v. "After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived – and is perhaps the better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms – historical fact – the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than when the rationalists began the attack." (Time Magazine, cited in Boice)

vi. "Do sinners talk of vanity? Let saints then speak of Jesus and his gospel. Do they talk impure words? Then let the faithful use the pure words of God, which like silver, the more used, the more melted in the fire, the more precious will they be." (Robert Hawker, cited in Spurgeon)

vii. "As silver enriches its owner, so does the Word of God enrich its lovers. Nothing so strengthens the intellect, clears the judgment, enlarges the views,

purifies the taste, quickens the imagination, and educates the whole man." (Meyer)

b. You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them: This was David's declaration of confidence in God's ability to **preserve** His own words. He did not only give His word to mankind; His providential hand has protected the existence and integrity of His word through the centuries.

i. There are some manuscripts and Bible translations that render this *You shall keep us, O LORD, You shall preserve us*. Yet, according to VanGemenen, there is legitimate manuscript support for the rendering **You shall keep them...You shall preserve them**. We can take it as true that God will **keep** and **preserve** both His Word and His people.

ii. "The psalmist breaks out into praise of the purity of His words, and declares that Jehovah will 'keep them,' and 'preserve them.' The 'them' refers to the words. There is no promise made of widespread revival or renewal. It is the salvation of a remnant and the preservation of His own words which Jehovah promises." (Morgan)

iii. God *has* kept and *will* **keep** and **preserve** His Word. "The French atheist Voltaire...once said, 'In twenty years Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear.' He wrote that in fifty years no one would remember Christianity. But in the year he wrote that, the British Museum paid the Russian government five hundred thousand dollars for a Bible manuscript while one of Voltaire's books was selling in the London book stalls for just eight cents." (Boice)

iv. "Give up no line of God's revelation.... Brethren, we cannot endure this shifty theology. May God send

us a race of men who have backbones! Men who believe something, and would die for what they believe. This Book deserves the sacrifice of our all for the maintenance of every line of it." (Spurgeon)

2. (8) *The way of the wicked.*

**The wicked prowl on every side,
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.**

a. **The wicked prowl on every side:** David knew that the existence and exaltation of God's pure word would not *eliminate* the **wicked**. They would still exist and **prowl on every side** as they could, but never with the assurance of final victory.

i. "Here we return to the fount of bitterness, which first made the Psalmist run to the wells of salvation, namely, the prevalence of wickedness." (Spurgeon)

b. **When vileness is exalted among the sons of men:** We might feel that this psalm ends on a sad, depressing note. Yet David was utterly realistic in his outlook. He knew that even with the precious and pure word of God available to men, many of the **sons of men** would still prefer that **vileness is exalted**.

i. "If 'vileness is set on high among the sons of men,' it is because the sons of men prefer it to the stern purity of goodness. A corrupt people will crown corrupt men and put them aloft." (Maclaren)

ii. We might say that David almost left it as a challenge. Let the **sons of men** exalt **vileness**; he would exalt the pure and precious word of God. Eventually all would see the winner of this contest. Let these wicked men do their worst – God helping him, David would do his best and see the victory of the LORD.

How Long, O Lord?

Psa 13:1 How much longer will you forget me, LORD? Forever? How much longer will you hide yourself from me?

Psa 13:2 How long must I endure trouble? How long will sorrow fill my heart day and night? How long will my enemies triumph over me?

Psa 13:3 Look at me, O LORD my God, and answer me. Restore my strength; don't let me die.

Psa 13:4 Don't let my enemies say, "We have defeated him." Don't let them gloat over my downfall.

Psa 13:5 I rely on your constant love; I will be glad, because you will rescue me.

Psa 13:6 I will sing to you, O LORD, because you have been good to me.

Psalms 13:1-6

Psalms 13 – Enlighten My Eyes

*The title tells us both the author and the audience of the psalm: **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** Some believe that **the Chief Musician** is the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). This is a psalm of transition. Starting in discouragement and despair, David finishes in a place of trust, joy, and encouragement.*

A. David's despair.

1. (1) David's despair with the LORD.

How long, O LORD?

Will You forget me forever?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

a. **How long, O LORD?** It seems that every child of God has asked this question at one time or another, and that every follower of God has felt neglected by God – or at

least that he has waited a long time for God to do what needs to be done.

i. "If the reader has never yet found occasion to use the language of this brief ode, he will do so ere long, if he be a man after the Lord's own heart."
(Spurgeon)

ii. **How long?** "This question is repeated no less than four times. It betokens very intense desire for deliverance, and great anguish of heart... It is not easy to prevent desire from degenerating into impatience. O for grace that, while we wait on God, we may be kept from indulging a murmuring spirit!"
(Spurgeon)

iii. **How long** is the critical question. Often we faint under the simple *length* of our trials. We feel we could endure almost anything if we knew when it would come to an end; yet sometimes we are tried under problems that make us cry out, "**How long?**"

iv. "Whenever you look into David's Psalms, you may somewhere or another see yourselves. You never get into a corner but you find David in that corner. I think that I was never so low that I could not find that David was lower; and I never climbed so high that I could not find that David was up above me, ready to sing his song upon his stringed instrument, even as I could sing mine." (Spurgeon)

b. **Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?** The pain in David's heart came from a sense that God had forgotten him and that God was distancing Himself from him. No doubt, David had faced worse circumstances but had faced them more bravely when he had sensed the presence of God with him. Yet now, feeling distant from God, it did not take much to send David into despair.

i. God will never forget us: *But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands. (Isa 49:14-16)*

ii. "The final absence of God is hell itself. 'Depart from me, ye cursed,' is worse than 'into everlasting fire.' To be punished from the presence of the Lord is the hell of hells, 2Th 1:9." (Trapp)

c. **Forget.... Hide Your face:** Of course, God did not **forget** David. God did not **hide** His **face from** David – but David felt like it. When we have such strong feelings, then the feelings create their own reality. David *felt* God had forgotten him, and *felt* God was hiding. So, in a sense, it was true for David – but true according to *feelings*, not according to *fact*.

i. There is a balance in life when it comes to feelings. Some people *ignore* feelings and think that feelings should have nothing to do with our relationship with God. This is an extreme viewpoint, because God has given us feelings as an expression of His image in us. We can feel anger, love, care, sorrow, and many other feelings, because God feels those feelings. Feelings are a gift from God and a sign that we are made in His image.

ii. On the other side, some live their lives *ruled* by feelings. They believe whatever reality their feelings present them. The problem with this is that though we have feelings because we are made in the image of God, our feelings are affected by our fallenness. We can't *trust* our feelings because of this. It was all right for David to feel these feelings, and good to take

them to God, but he should never accept the reality of feelings as “real” reality.

iii. “This is a lesson of profound value. If the heart be overburdened and Jehovah seems to hide His face, let the story of woe be told to Him. It is a holy exercise. Men may not understand it. They may even charge us with failing faith.” (Morgan)

2. (2) David’s despair with himself and others.

**How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?**

How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

a. **How long shall I take counsel in my soul:** No wonder David was discouraged! Taking counsel in his own soul had led him to **sorrow in his heart daily**. When I am discouraged and depressed, the answer is not in looking inside myself, but in looking to the LORD.

i. Many times when I am confronted with problems, I find this to be true: The more I *think* about the problems, the more depressed I get. But when I *pray* about the problems, a glorious sense of release and peace comes.

ii. Thinking about our troubles is hard work. Trouble is often like a pill God wants us to just swallow, but we make it worse by keeping it in our mouths and chewing it.

iii. Spurgeon proposed a sermon on the phrase, “**How long should I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?**” He suggested that the sermon would have these points: “*Self-torture*, its cause, curse, crime, and cure.”

b. **How long will my enemy be exalted over me?**

This mentions the third way that David was depressed. David didn’t want to lose in any area he was attacked

and see his **enemy...exalted over** him. David was depressed in three ways:

- First, in his relationship with God.
- Second, within himself.
- Third, in regard to his enemies.
 - i. This was not a purely selfish desire. David knew he was the LORD's man, with a special calling to lead God's people. In this sense, David's enemies were the LORD's enemies, and enemies against the people of God.
 - ii. David's feeling that God had abandoned him was connected to his sense of depression. Boice helpfully lists several sources of spiritual depression:
 - Temperament may incline one to depression.
 - Illness can drain the physical strength and lead to depression.
 - Exhaustion can also leave one quite open to depression and the feeling of abandonment.
 - The let-down after some great effort, fueled by coming down off of an adrenaline high, can often lead to depression.
 - Pressure from spiritual and natural enemies can push us toward depression.

B. David's dependent prayer.

1. (3) David prays for his relationship with God.

**Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes,
Lest I sleep the *sleep of death*;**

- a. **Consider and hear me:** We should not think that David meant two different things when he said,

“Consider and hear me.” He used the Hebrew method of repetition to show emphasis. David desperately cried out to God, asking the LORD to **hear** him.

i. David felt God was not listening before (*Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? Psa 13:1*). Yet he should continue to cry out because God is honored when we persistently and desperately cry out to Him.

ii. God often waits until our prayers are desperate before He answers us. The cause of the powerlessness of much of our prayer is lack of desperation; too often we almost pray with the attitude of wanting God to care about things we really don't care too much about.

iii. Desperate prayer has power not because it in itself persuades a reluctant God. Instead, it demonstrates that our heart cares passionately about the things God cares about, fulfilling Jesus' promise *If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you (Joh 15:7)*.

b. **Enlighten my eyes:** David had the wisdom to know that though he felt powerful feelings, he wasn't seeing reality. His vision was clouded and dark, so he cried out to God, **“Enlighten my eyes.”**

i. This was a great prayer. We need the light of God to shine upon us and to give us His wisdom and knowledge. No matter what problem we are in, we should cry out with all our heart, **“Enlighten my eyes.”**

ii. The Apostle Paul knew the importance of having our eyes enlightened by the Lord. This is what he prayed for Christians: *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit*

of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (Eph 1:17-19).

c. **Lest I sleep the sleep of death:** If we are not enlightened by God, we will surely fall asleep. And often, spiritual **sleep** leads to spiritual **death**.

i. Paul may have had this verse in mind when he wrote of our need for the light of Jesus: *Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light (Eph 5:14).*

2. (4) *David prays for victory over his enemies.*

**Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him";
Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.**

a. **Lest my enemy say:** David knew one of the worst parts about losing to anyone is hearing him boast after he has defeated you. He did not want his **enemy** to **rejoice** when he was brought low.

b. **Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved:** Knowing how his enemies would gloat over his fall, David was even more determined to not be **moved**.

i. "Awareness of God and the enemy is virtually the hallmark of every psalm of David; the positive and negative charges which produced the driving force of his best years." (Kidner)

C. David's declaration.

1. (5a) *David's trust in God's mercy.*

But I have trusted in Your mercy;

a. **I have trusted**: David, after his prayer, came to a place of confidence and trust. **I have trusted** speaks in the past tense; it is as if David remembered that he really did trust God, and he cleared away the fog from his sleepy eyes as God enlightened his eyes.

b. **In Your mercy**: At this place of discouragement, David could not trust in God's justice, or in God's law, or in God's holiness. Those things might condemn him because his feelings had made him not see clearly. But he could always trust in God's **mercy**. When you can't trust anything else, trust in God's mercy.

i. "He begins his prayer as if he thought God would never give him a kind look more.... But by the time he had exercised himself a little in duty, his distemper wears off, the mists scatter, and his faith breaks out as the sun in its strength." (William Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (5b-6a) David's joy in the LORD and His salvation.

My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

I will sing to the LORD,

a. **My heart shall rejoice**: Now, David was still in the realm of feelings (**rejoice**). But he directed his feelings instead of having his feelings direct him (**shall rejoice**). He told his heart to get busy rejoicing!

b. **In Your salvation**: This is what David rejoiced in. David, if he could rejoice in nothing else, could rejoice in the salvation God gave him. This is solid ground for any believer. If you are saved, you can **rejoice**, and tell your heart to start rejoicing.

c. **I will sing to the LORD**: David knew rejoicing is wonderfully expressed in singing. So, he would **sing to the LORD**. Singing to the LORD would both *express* his joy and *increase* his joy.

i. "There is not half enough singing in the world...I remember a servant who used to sing while she was at the wash-tub. Her mistress said to her, 'Why, Jane, how is it that you are always singing?' She said, 'It keeps the bad thoughts away.'" (Spurgeon)

ii. David moved from being depressed and feeling abandoned by God, to singing joy. "The fact that we feel abandoned itself means that we really know God is there. To be abandoned you need somebody to be abandoned by. Because we are Christians and have been taught by God in the Scriptures, we know that God still loves us and will be faithful to us, regardless of our feelings." (Boice)

3. (6b) *With enlightened eyes, David sees God's goodness.*

Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

a. **Because He has dealt bountifully with me:** As David thought about it, he had good reason to rejoice and sing, because God had been good to him. If we will only think about it, every person on this earth has reason to rejoice, because in some way God has been good to everyone.

b. **He has dealt bountifully with me:** What a transition! In the beginning of the psalm, David was overwhelmed by his feelings and believed that God forgot him and was hiding from him. He had trouble with God, with himself, and with others. Yet now he sees how God had **dealt bountifully with** him. Because his eyes were enlightened, David could now see God's goodness, and what a change in perspective that was!

i. Before God can enlighten our eyes, we must agree that we don't see everything. We need to realize that our feelings are not giving us full and accurate information. But if we will do this, and cry out to the

LORD, He will enlighten our eyes and bring us from a place of despair to a place of trust, joy, and confidence!

ii. "[In times of trouble, the Lord] would with one Scripture or another, strengthen me against all; insomuch that I have often said, *Were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for the greater comfort's sake.*" (John Bunyan, cited in Spurgeon)

The Fool Says, There Is No God

Psa 14:1 Fools say to themselves, "There is no God!" They are all corrupt, and they have done terrible things; there is no one who does what is right.

Psa 14:2 The LORD looks down from heaven at us humans to see if there are any who are wise, any who worship him.

Psa 14:3 But they have all gone wrong; they are all equally bad. Not one of them does what is right, not a single one.

Psa 14:4 "Don't they know?" asks the LORD. "Are all these evildoers ignorant? They live by robbing my people, and they never pray to me."

Psa 14:5 But then they will be terrified, for God is with those who obey him.

Psa 14:6 Evildoers frustrate the plans of the humble, but the LORD is their protection.

Psa 14:7 How I pray that victory will come to Israel from Zion. How happy the people of Israel will be when the LORD makes them prosperous again!

Psalms 14:1-7

Psalms 14 – Fallen Man and a Faithful God

*This psalm is simply titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** With this title, we have the author (**David**) and the intended audience (**the Chief Musician**), whom we can take to represent more than a choir leader such as Asaph; it*

looks to the ultimate Musician of the universe, God Himself. "The thought of the whole psalm is the safety of godliness, and the peril of ungodliness." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. The sad condition of the man who rejects God.

1. (1) David's analysis of the God-rejecting man.

The fool has said in his heart,

" There is no God."

They are corrupt,

They have done abominable works,

There is none who does good.

a. **The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God":** David looked at those who denied the existence of God and came to the conclusion that they are *fools*. The idea behind this ancient Hebrew word translated **fool** is more *moral* than *intellectual*. David did not have in mind those not smart enough to figure God out (no one is that smart); he had in mind those who simply reject God.

i. From the italics in the New King James Version we can see that what the fool actually says is, **"No God."** "That is, 'No God for me.' So his is a practical as well as theoretical atheism. Not only does he not believe in God, he also acts on his conviction." (Boice)

ii. David says this because of the plain evidence that there is a God: evidence in both *creation* and *human conscience* that Paul described in Romans 1. The fact that some men insist on denying the existence of God does not erase God from the universe; it instead speaks to their own standing as *fools*. As Paul wrote in Rom 1:22, *Professing to be wise, they became fools*.

iii. "The Hebrew word for *fool* in this psalm is *nabal*, a word which implies an aggressive perversity, epitomized in the Nabal of 1Sa 25:25." (Kidner)

iv. The God-denying man is a **fool** because:

- He denies what is plainly evident.
- He believes in tremendous effect with no cause.
- He denies a moral authority in the universe.
- He believes only what can be proven by the scientific method.
- He takes a dramatic, losing chance on his supposition that there is no God.
- He refuses to be persuaded by the many powerful arguments for the existence of God.

v. There are many powerful arguments for the existence of God; among them are these:

- *The Cosmological Argument*: The existence of the universe means there must be a creator God.
- *The Teleological Argument*: The existence of design in the universe means there must be a designer God.
- *The Anthropological Argument*: The unique nature and character of humanity means there must be a relational God.
- *The Moral Argument*: The existence of morality means there must be a governing God.

vi. "Which is cause, and which is effect? Does atheism result from folly, or folly from atheism? It would be perfectly correct to say that each is cause and each is effect." (Morgan)

b. **The fool has said in his heart**: David not only found *what* the fool said to be significant; *where* he said it is also important (**in his heart**). The God-denying man David has in mind is not merely troubled by intellectual objections to the existence of God; **in his heart** he

wishes God away, typically for fundamentally moral reasons.

i. Joh 3:20 explains it this way: *For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

ii. This means that the man David had in mind is not an atheist for primarily intellectual reasons. "Honest intellectual agnosticism does not necessarily produce immorality; dishonest emotional atheism always does." (Morgan)

iii. When we speak with one who denies God, we should not only – or even primarily – speak to his head, but also to his **heart**. "Let the preacher aim at the heart, and preach the all-conquering love of Jesus, and he will by God's grace win more doubters to the faith of the gospel than any hundred of the best reasoners who only direct their arguments to the head." (Spurgeon)

iv. The phrasing of **said in his heart** also reminds us that it is possible for one to *say in his mind* that there is a God, yet deny it in his **heart** and life. One may believe in God in theory, yet be a *practical atheist* in the way he lives.

v. 1Sa 27:1 tells us what David **said in his heart** on one occasion: *Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand.*" Was this not David, in some sense, also denying God and speaking as a **fool**?

vi. "Practical denial or neglect of His working in the world, rather than a creed of negation, is in the

psalmist's mind. In effect, we say that there is no God when we shut Him up in a far-off heaven, and never think of Him as concerned in our affairs. To strip Him of His justice and rob Him of His control is the part of a fool. For the Biblical conception of folly is moral perversity rather than intellectual feebleness, and whoever is morally and religiously wrong cannot be in reality intellectually right." (Maclaren)

c. **They are corrupt, they have done abominable works:** David here considers the *result* of denying God. It leads men into *corruption* and **abominable works**. This isn't to say that every atheist lives a dissolute life and every God-believer lives a good life; yet there is a marked difference in moral behavior between those who take God seriously and those who do not.

d. **There is none who does good:** As David considered the sin of the God-denier, he looked out over the landscape of humanity and concluded that **there is none who does good**. He did not mean that there is no human good in this world, but that fallen man is so fallen that he does not by instinct do **good**, and even the **good** he may do is tinged with evil.

- We are born with both the will and the capacity to do evil; no one has to teach a child to do bad things.
- The path of least resistance usually leads us to do bad, not to do good.
- It is often easier to encourage others to do bad things, instead of good things.
- Many of our good deeds are tinged with selfish, bad motives.

i. "This is no exaggeration, since every sin implies the effrontery of supposedly knowing better than God,

and the corruption of loving evil more than good.”
(Kidner)

2. (2-3) *Heaven’s analysis of fallen humanity.*

The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,

To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

They have all turned aside,

They have together become corrupt;

There is none who does good,

No, not one.

a. **The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men:** While man may wish to forget about God, God never forgets about man. He is always observing man, looking **down from heaven upon the children of men**.

i. In man’s rejection of God, there is often the wish that God would *just leave us alone*. This is an unwise wish, because all human life depends upon God (Act 17:28; Mat 5:45). This is an *impossible* wish, because God has rights of a creator over His creation.

ii. “The words remind us of God descending from heaven to observe the folly of those building the tower of Babel (Gen 11:5) or looking down upon the wickedness of the race prior to his judgment by the flood.” (Kidner)

b. **To see if there are any who understand, who seek God:** When God does look down from heaven, one thing He looks for is if there is any *understanding* or *seeking* among humanity.

i. God looks for this not primarily as an *intellectual* judgment; He doesn’t wonder if there are any smart enough to figure Him out. He looks for this more as a

moral and *spiritual* judgment: if there are men who **understand** His heart and plan, and who **seek** Him for righteousness sake.

ii. We deceive ourselves into thinking that man, on his own, really does **seek God**. Don't all the religions and rituals and practices from the beginning of time demonstrate that man does indeed **seek God**? Not at all. If man initiates the search then he doesn't seek the true God, the God of the Bible. Instead he seeks an idol that he makes himself.

iii. "You have gone through this form of worship, but you have not sought after God. I am sick of this empty religiousness. We see it everywhere; it is not communion with God, it is not getting to God; indeed, God is not in it at all." (Spurgeon, from a sermon on Romans 3)

c. **They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt:** When God looks, this is what He finds. He finds that man has **turned** away from God and has therefore **become corrupt**.

i. Poole on **turned aside**: "Or, *are grown sour*, as this word signifies."

ii. "The Hebrews have the same word for sin and a dead carcase; and again the same word for sin and stench." (Trapp)

d. **There is none who does good, no, not one:** When God finds **none who does good**, it is because there *are* none. It isn't as if there were some and God couldn't see them. David here observes and remembers that man is truly, profoundly, deeply *fallen*.

i. David's use of "**there is none who does good**" suddenly broadens the scope beyond the atheist to include *us*. "'After all, we are not atheists!' we might

say. But now, as we are let in on God's perspective, we see that we are too included. In other words, the outspoken atheist of verse 1 is only one example of mankind in general." (Kidner)

ii. "What a picture of our race is this! Save only where grace reigns, there is none that doeth good; humanity, fallen and debased, is a desert without an oasis, a night without a star, a dunghill without a jewel, a hell without a bottom." (Spurgeon)

B. God's defense of His righteous people.

1. (4-6) *God defends the **generation of the righteous**.*

**Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge,
Who eat up my people as they eat bread,
And do not call on the LORD?
There they are in great fear,
For God *is* with the generation of the righteous.
You shame the counsel of the poor,
But the LORD is his refuge.**

a. **Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge:**
David first considered the profound fallenness of man; now he deals with the fate of God's people in such a fallen world. God's people might seem like the weak fools, but David understood that it is

the workers of iniquity who have **no knowledge**.

i. "The question has almost a tone of surprise, as if even Omniscience found...wonder in men's mysterious love of evil." (Maclaren)

b. **Who eat up my people as they eat bread:** It *looks* like the **workers of iniquity** are strong and have the upper hand. David wondered if the people of God are abandoned to the fools and the corrupt of this world, to those who **do not call on the LORD**.

i. "As *they eat bread*, i.e. with as little regret or remorse, and with as much greediness, and delight, and constancy too, as they use to eat their meat." (Poole)

ii. **And do not call on the LORD**: "Practical atheism is, of course, prayerless." (Maclaren)

c. **There they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous**: After asking the question, David now answers it with great wisdom. The **workers of iniquity** seem strong and confident, but they are actually **in great fear**, because they can't erase the consciousness that **God is with the generation of the righteous**.

i. "A panic terror seized them: 'they feared a fear,' as the Hebrew puts it; an undefinable, horrible, mysterious dread crept over them. The most hardened of men have their periods when conscience casts them into a cold sweat of alarm." (Spurgeon)

ii. As strong as they may wish to deny it, they live under the cloud of knowing that *they are battling against God*, and can therefore never win.

d. **You shame the counsel of the poor, but the LORD is his refuge**: David here announces it to the **workers of iniquity** previously mentioned – that they may work against the **poor**, but God has a refuge for them that cannot be breached. They are fighting against God and will never succeed.

i. Spurgeon considered the ways that the **poor** takes **counsel**.

- He takes counsel with his own weakness and sees that he must depend upon God.

- He takes counsel with his observations and sees the end of the wicked.

- He takes counsel with the Bible and trusts it to be the word of God.

- He takes counsel with his own experience and sees that God answers prayer.

ii. Spurgeon used this verse to consider the ways that Christians should stand strong though they are shamed and mocked by the **workers of iniquity**. "You young men in the great firms of London, you working men that work in the factories – you are sneered at. Let them sneer. If they can sneer you out of your religion, you have not got any worth having. Remember you can be laughed into hell, but you can never be laughed out of it." (Spurgeon)

iii. "'Oh! but they will point at you.' Cannot you bear to be pointed at? 'But they will chaff you.' Chaff – let them chaff you. Can that hurt a man that is a man? If you are a molluscos creature that has no backbone, you may be afraid of jokes, and jeers, and jests; but if God has made you upright, stand upright and be a man." (Spurgeon)

2. (7) *Longing for the LORD's salvation.*

Oh, that the salvation of Israel *would come out of Zion!*

When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people,

Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.

a. **Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion:** David *knew* that the LORD was a refuge for His people and that the workers of iniquity would never win. Yet that was hard to see at the present time, so David expressed his great longing that God would bring the victory and deliverance He had promised to His people.

b. **When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people:** This was not the Babylonian Captivity, many generations after David's time. Here **captivity** is used in a general sense, speaking of any time or situation where God's people are oppressed and bound.

i. "We take that phrase 'turns the captivity' in the sense in which it admittedly bears in Job 42:10 and Eze 16:53, namely that of deliverance from misfortune." (Maclaren)

c. **Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad:** David anticipates the coming deliverance, and calls the people of God to be joyful in consideration of it.

Who Shall Dwell on Your Holy Hill?

Psa 15:1 LORD, who may enter your Temple? Who may worship on Zion, your sacred hill?

Psa 15:2 Those who obey God in everything and always do what is right, whose words are true and sincere,

Psa 15:3 and who do not slander others. They do no wrong to their friends nor spread rumors about their neighbors.

Psa 15:4 They despise those whom God rejects, but honor those who obey the LORD. They always do what they promise, no matter how much it may cost.

Psa 15:5 They make loans without charging interest and cannot be bribed to testify against the innocent. Whoever does these things will always be secure.

Psalms 15:1-5

Psalms 15 – The Character of the One God Receives

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. In it, David meditates over the character of the man received into the presence of God. We have no precise occasion for this psalm, but it may well have been on the bringing of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). This was a*

time when David was very much concerned with the questions asked and answered in this psalm.

A. The question presented: Who can come before God?

1. (1a) Who can come to the tabernacle of God?

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?

a. **LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?** In one sense, David's question here is figurative. Though he, like the sons of Korah, may have wished to live in the house of God (Psa 84:2-4; Psa 84:10), it was impossible for him because David was not a priest.

i. The word translated **abide** can be better thought of as *sojourn*; it describes a visit, receiving the hospitality of a tent-dwelling host. This opening is understood in light of the customs of hospitality in the ancient Near East.

ii. "In the gracious hospitality of the antique world, a guest was sheltered from all harm; his person was inviolable, his wants all met. So the guest of Jehovah is safe, can claim asylum from every foe and share in all the bountiful provision of His abode." (Maclaren)

b. **Abide in Your tabernacle:** The **tabernacle** of God was the great tent of meeting that God told Moses and Israel to build for Him during the Exodus (Exodus 25-31). This tabernacle survived through several centuries, and at David's time seems to have been at Gibeon (1Ch 16:39-40).

i. Since the **tabernacle** was the place where man met with God through the work of the priests and the practice of sacrifice, David's longing to **abide in Your tabernacle** was actually a desire to **abide** in the presence of God.

- ii. David has in mind the life that lives in the presence of God – who walks in close fellowship with God because the heart, the mind, and the life are all in step with the heart, mind, and life of God.

2. (1b) *Who can come to the hill of God's temple?*

Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

a. **Who may dwell in Your holy hill?** In one sense, David here simply uses the Hebrew technique of repetition to ask the same question as in the first part of the verse.

- i. The word **dwell** here has a more permanent sense than the word *abide* in the previous line. It is as if David wrote, "Who may be received as a guest into God's tent, enjoying all the protections of His hospitality? Who may live as a citizen in His holy hill?"

b. **Your holy hill:** Yet in another sense, David asked a second, more intense question. At this time, the **tabernacle** of God was at Gibeon (1Ch 16:39; 1Ch 21:29). Depending upon when David wrote this psalm, it may very well be that the *ark of the covenant* was in Jerusalem (2Sa 6:17) and even at the **holy hill** of Moriah, where God had told David to build the temple (2Sa 24:18-21; 1Ch 21:28 to 1Ch 22:5, 2Ch 3:1).

- i. Since the tabernacle was not at God's **holy hill** in David's time (though the ark of the covenant was), David has two different – yet similar – places in mind.

B. The character of the one who can come before God.

1. (2-3) *His character among his friends and neighbors.*

**He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;
He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,**

**Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;**

a. **He who walks uprightly:** In describing the character of the man who can live in God's presence, David begins with two general descriptions (**walks uprightly, and works righteousness**).

i. In one sense David speaks from an Old Covenant perspective. Though the Old Covenant gave an important place to sacrifice and atonement through blood, it also based blessing and cursing on obedience (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28). The disobedient could not expect blessing, including the blessing of God's presence.

ii. The New Covenant gives us a different ground for blessing and relationship with God: the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Under the New Covenant, faith rather than performance is the basis for blessing.

iii. Nevertheless, David's principle is also accurate under the New Covenant in this sense: the conduct of one's life is a reflection of his fellowship with God. As John wrote: *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1Jn 1:6)*. We might say that under the Old Covenant a righteous walk was the *precondition* for fellowship with God; under the New Covenant a righteous walk is the *result* of fellowship with God, founded on faith.

iv. "The Christian answer to the psalmist's question goes deeper than his, but is fatally incomplete unless it include his and lay the same stress on duties to men." (Maclaren)

v. "David responds to the question of verse 1 with *representative* answers. This means that the items listed in verse 2-5 are not all-inclusive." (Boice) We also see this from similar passages such as Psa 24:3-4 and Isa 33:14-17, which are not identical in the items listed.

b. Speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue: David here understood that an upright and righteous life is known by the way someone *speaks*. As Jesus said in Mat 12:34 : *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*.

i. "I think more damage has been done to the church and its work by gossip, criticism, and slander than by any other single sin. So I say, don't do it. Bite your tongue before you criticize another Christian." (Boice)

ii. Clarke wrote this about the word **backbite**: "He is a *knave*, who would rob you of your *good name*; he is a *coward*, that would speak of you in your *absence* what he dared not to do in your *presence*; and only an ill-conditioned *dog* would fly at and *bite* your *back* when your *face* was *turned*. All these *three ideas* are included in the term; and they all meet in the *detractor* and *calumniator*. His tongue is the tongue of a *knave*, a *coward*, and a *dog*."

c. Nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend: David also knew that righteousness is expressed in the *way we treat one another*. We might have thought David would have given greater priority to religious obligations such as sacrifice or purification ceremonies – which certainly have their place, but are useless without the practical godliness of being good and honest and honorable to neighbors and friends.

i. In these words of David, we also see the deeper work of Jesus Christ, who commanded us to not only love our **neighbor** and **friend**, but also to love our enemies and those who spitefully use us (Mat 5:44).

2. (4-5a) *His character among difficult people.*

**In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
But he honors those who fear the LORD;
He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;
He *who* does not put out his money at usury,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.**

a. **In whose eyes a vile person is despised:** David knew that we cannot love good unless we also oppose evil. As it says in Pro 8:13 : *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil*. Yet this righteous man also **honors those who fear the LORD**; he makes his judgments about men on a godly basis, not from favoritism, flattery, or corruption.

i. "Who rejected the wicked, however rich and honourable; and chose the well inclined, however poor and contemptible in the world." (Horne)

ii. "He doth not admire his person, nor envy his condition, nor court him with flatteries, nor value his company and conversation, nor approve of or comply with his courses; but he thinks meanly of him; he judgeth him a most miserable man, and a great object of pity he abhors his wicked practices, and labours to make such ways contemptible and hateful to all men as far as it lies in his power." (Poole)

iii. **Honors those who fear the LORD:** "We must be as honest in paying respect as in paying our bills. Honour to whom honour is due. To all good men we owe a debt of honour, and we have no right to hand

over what is their due to vile persons who happen to be in high places.” (Spurgeon)

b. He who swears to his own hurt and does not change: The idea behind this is the man keeps his promises even when it is no longer to his advantage to do so.

i. “Joshua and the elders kept their oath to the Gibeonites, though to their inconvenience.” (Trapp)

ii. “The law prohibited the substitution of another animal sacrifice for that which had been vowed (Lev 27:10); and the psalm uses the same word for ‘changeth,’ with evident allusion to the prohibition, which must therefore have been known to the psalmist.” (Maclaren)

c. He who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent: David described the man who is wants to live a righteous life when it comes to *money*. Many people who would be considered godly in other areas of their lives still have not decided to use their money in a way that honors God and shows love and care to others.

i. **Usury** “is condemned in the Bible, not in general (*cf.* Deu 23:20; Mat 25:27) but in the context of trading on a brother’s misfortunes, as a comparison between Deu 23:19 and Lev 25:35-38 makes clear.” (Kidner)

ii. “I am convinced that the concern of this verse is not with receiving interest for money loaned, though it seems to say that, but rather with whom the interest is taken from. In other words, the verse concerns greed eclipsing justice.... The best Old Testament illustration of the abuse verse 5 is talking about is in Nehemiah 5, where all the wealthy were

taking advantage of the poor among the exiles when all should have been helping one another.” (Boice)

iii. It is easy – and proper – to look at this list and see where we fall short. Yet seeing our sin in this psalm should drive us to Jesus. We see this whole psalm through the grid of the New Covenant; we see Jesus as having perfectly fulfilled the requirements of the law and the standards of this psalm. We see that by faith His obedience is accounted as ours, and that we are being transformed into His image, thus the fulfillment of this psalm should more and more mark our life.

3. (5b) The blessing that comes from this character.

He who does these *things* shall never be moved.

a. **He who does these things:** David has in mind the basic performance-based system of the Old Covenant. The one who has pleased God with this kind of performance can expect blessing from God.

i. “To continue in sin is to frustrate the very purpose of God in grace. To do that is to be excluded from His tent, to be shut out from the holy mountain.” (Morgan)

b. **Shall never be moved:** In the Old Covenant system, this stability of life is a blessing from God given to the obedient. Under the New Covenant, the promise of stability and security is given to those who abide in faith, such faith being evident through a life lived in general obedience.

i. The idea behind **shall never be moved** is that this righteous one will be a guest in the tent of God forever (as in Psa 61:4). In New Testament words, we could express it like this: *And the world is passing*

away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1Jn 2:17).

You Will Not Abandon My Soul

Psa 16:1 Protect me, O God; I trust in you for safety.

Psa 16:2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; all the good things I have come from you."

Psa 16:3 How excellent are the LORD's faithful people! My greatest pleasure is to be with them.

Psa 16:4 Those who rush to other gods bring many troubles on themselves. I will not take part in their sacrifices; I will not worship their gods.

Psa 16:5 You, LORD, are all I have, and you give me all I need; my future is in your hands.

Psa 16:6 How wonderful are your gifts to me; how good they are!

Psa 16:7 I praise the LORD, because he guides me, and in the night my conscience warns me.

Psa 16:8 I am always aware of the LORD's presence; he is near, and nothing can shake me.

Psa 16:9 And so I am thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure,

Psa 16:10 because you protect me from the power of death. I have served you faithfully, and you will not abandon me to the world of the dead.

Psa 16:11 You will show me the path that leads to life; your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.

Psalms 16:1-11

Psalms 16 – The Benefits of a Life-Commitment to God

*This psalm is titled **A Michtam of David**. The title **Michtam** is commonly understood as golden; others think it is related*

to a word meaning to cover. Since the psalms with this title (16, 56-60) are written from times of peril, some think the idea is of covering the lips in the sense of secrecy, as if this were a secret or silent psalm given in a time of crisis. This is a wonderful song relating how David found the secret of contentment and great gladness even in pressing times; it also powerfully predicts Jesus and His work for us.

A. David's confidence in God.

1. (1-3) What David's soul said to the LORD.

Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.

O my soul, you have said to the LORD,

"You are my Lord,

My goodness is nothing apart from You."

As for the saints who are on the earth,

"They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

a. **Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust:** It seems that David wrote this psalm from a time of trouble, because he asked for preservation, knew that he would not be moved (Psa 16:8), and had confidence in some kind of resurrection (Psa 16:10). Yet the *tone* of this psalm is not despair or complaint; it is settled joy. Despite his trouble, David had a praising confidence in his God.

i. "This was a most powerful plea, for to trust God is the highest honour we can do him, it is to set the crown upon his head." (Trapp)

ii. "Preserve me from the world; let me not be carried away with its excitements; suffer me not to be before its blandishments, nor to fear its frowns. Preserve me, from the devil; let him not tempt me above what I am able to bear. Preserve me from myself; keep me from growing envious, selfish, high-minded, proud,

slothful. Preserve me from those evils into which I see others run, and preserve me, from those evils into which I am myself most apt to run; keep me from evils known and from evils unknown." (Spurgeon)

b. **You are my Lord:** This is what David's **soul** had **said to the LORD**. David happily said that Yahweh (**LORD**) was his master (**Lord**).

i. David knew how to speak to his own soul; Psa 42:5; Psa 43:5 are other examples. It is a good thing to speak good things to our own soul.

c. **My goodness is nothing apart from You:** David knew that his very best – all of his goodness – was **nothing** apart from God.

- It was **nothing** when it came to making David righteous before God; he needed God to bring His righteousness to David.

- It was **nothing** because David's **goodness** was itself a gift of God; therefore apart from Him, it was **nothing**.

- It was **nothing** because David's **goodness**, as precious as it was, was of small value without his relationship with God.

i. "I receive all good from thee, but no good can I return to thee; wherefore I acknowledge thee to be most rich, and myself to be most beggardly." (Greenham, cited in Spurgeon)

d. **As for the saints who are on the earth:** David proclaimed regarding God's people on this earth, "**They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.**" David *delighted* in the people of God, despite all their failings, scandals, and embarrassments.

i. This is an obvious failing for many followers of Jesus Christ today. They are so negative about the people of God that they find themselves unable to see any excellence in God's people, unable to **delight** in them.

ii. "This is a practical matter, for it is a way by which we can measure our relationship to the Lord. Do you love other Christians? Do you find it good and rewarding to be with them? Do you seek their company? This is a simple test. Those who love the Lord will love the company of those who also love him." (Boice)

2. (4-6) *The folly of idolatry and the blessing of honoring the LORD.*

Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten *after* another *god*;

Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer,

Nor take up their names on my lips.

O LORD, *You are* the portion of my inheritance and my cup;

You maintain my lot.

The lines have fallen to me in pleasant *places*;

Yes, I have a good inheritance.

a. **Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten *after* another *god*:** David understood that those who served other gods found many **sorrows** in life.

i. David knew that his life, lived for God, was not an easy one. He experienced many hardships because he remained faithful to God. Nevertheless, he also knew that life lived for **another god** was even *more difficult*. It was the attitude of Peter in Joh 6:66-69, when he said "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

ii. "There is a distinct echo of the story of the Fall in the phrase, *multiply their sorrows*, since very similar

words were spoken to Eve in the Hebrew of Gen 3:16. There could hardly be a more ominous allusion to what follows from apostasy.” (Kidner)

b. Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer:

David allowed his knowledge of the *futility* of pagan beliefs to affect his behavior. Therefore, he would not follow the pagans in their vain practices.

i. “Many heathens sacrificed to their idols (that is, to devils) with man’s blood, against all laws of humanity and piety.” (Trapp) In addition, the priests of Baal offered their own blood to their false god; some Roman Catholics and Muslims also whip themselves to blood, offering their blood to their twisted conception of God.

c. O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot: After stating that there was nothing found in the pagan gods, David explained the good he received from Yahweh.

i. **You are the portion of my inheritance:** David was the youngest son in a family with many sons. He could expect no **inheritance** from his family; yet he took joy and comfort in the fact that God was **the portion** of his **inheritance**, and he knew that he had a **good inheritance**. The **lines** that marked out his inheritance had **fallen** to him **in pleasant places**.

ii. God said to the priests in the days of Moses: “I am your portion and your inheritance” (Num 18:20). David understood that this was a promise given not only to the priests, but also to all who would trust God to be the portion of their inheritance. “Every godly man has the same possession and the same prohibitions as the priests had. Like them he is landless, and instead of estates has Jehovah.” (Maclaren)

iii. **You maintain my lot:** This described the **portion** of David's inheritance. David was confident that God would **maintain** what He had first given to him.

iv. This attitude did not come easily or always to David. He complained to Saul in 1Sa 26:19 : *for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, "Go, serve other gods."* Yet here in this psalm, he comes back to the conclusion that the LORD *is* his inheritance and *will* maintain his lot.

v. David's words here speak of *contentment*. He is content with what God has given him. A mark of our age – especially with the Baby Boom generation and perhaps even more with those following – is discontentment, boredom, and restlessness. The generation with short attention spans, the constant need for excitement and adrenaline rushes, and 24-hour-a-day entertainment, needs to know by experience what David knew.

B. The benefits of David's confidence.

1. (7-8) *The benefits of guidance and security.*

**I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel;
My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
I have set the LORD always before me;
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.**

a. **I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel:**
The false gods of the nations could never give **counsel** the way the LORD gave it to David. When David needed guidance, God gave it to him, and therefore David praised God.

b. **My heart also instructs me in the night seasons:**
David's heart was instructed first by God and His Word, and therefore his heart could also instruct him in the

ways of God. This is an example of the benefits that come from the transformation of thinking spoken of in Rom 12:1-2.

i. Solomon says in Psa 127:1-2 that it *can be* vain to stay up late to try to figure out your problems. Yet David, Solomon's father, knew the joy of communing with God **in the night seasons** and receiving guidance from Him.

ii. "Methinks I hear a sweet still voice within me, saying, This is the way, walk in it; and this in the night season, when I am wrapped in rest and silence."
(Trapp)

c. **I have set the LORD always before me:** This speaks of a *decision* David made to put God first in his life. He determined that God would always be his focus, his perspective.

i. In the ultimate sense, only Jesus did this perfectly. He was always in the intimate presence of His Father. "The method taken by Christ, as man, to support himself in time of trouble, and persevere unto the end, was to maintain a constant and actual sense of the presence of Jehovah...he then feared not the powers of earth and hell combined for his destruction." (Horne)

d. **Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved:** This was the plain result of David's decision to put God first. There was a standing and security in David's life that would not have otherwise existed.

2. (9-11) *The benefits of joy and preservation.*

**Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.**

**You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.**

a. **Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices:** David continued to describe the benefits of his decision to *set the LORD always before* him (Psa 16:8). This decision brought a *gladness* and a *glory* to David's life.

i. For those who do not live out a true commitment to God, it is easy for them to think of what such a commitment *costs* them. This is not entirely bad, because this kind of decision to *set the LORD always before* one's self does have a cost, and the cost should be counted and appreciated. It may cost certain pleasures, popularity, anonymity, family relationships, life goals, career choices, financial priorities, and so forth.

ii. Yet David also tells us some of the *benefits* of such a life decision: **my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices**. There was happiness and a glory David knew by this life commitment that he would not have known otherwise.

iii. David could maturely understand both the costs and the benefits, and sing a song of praise about his life decision.

b. **My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol:** David described a further benefit of his life decision to *set the LORD always before* him. It was the confidence of God's care and blessing in the life beyond. David had the settled **hope** (a confidence, not a simple wish) that God would not leave his **soul** in the grave (**Sheol**), but that his life would continue on in the presence of God.

i. This statement is a wonderful declaration of trust in some sort of resurrection and afterlife. Yet, Psalms contains both such confident statements and other more doubtful words about the life beyond (such as in Psa 6:5; Psa 88:11). This cloudy understanding of the afterlife in the Old Testament does not surprise the reader of the New Testament, who knows that Jesus Christ brought *life and immortality to light* (2Ti 1:10).

c. **Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption:** Wonderfully (and perhaps unknowingly), David spoke beyond himself. In one sense David was indeed the **Holy One** of God, whose soul would not be left in the grave. Yet in a greater and more literal sense, only Jesus Christ fulfills this in His resurrection.

i. This was perceived by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, who said that these words went beyond David who was obviously dead, buried in a grave, and whose body had long ago decayed into dust (Act 2:25-31).

ii. In quoting and applying this passage from Psalms 16 to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, Peter showed an inspired understanding of the work of Jesus on the cross. He understood that because Jesus bore our sin without becoming a sinner, He remained the **Holy One**, even in His death. Since it is incomprehensible that God's Holy One should be bound by death, the resurrection was absolutely inevitable. As Peter said: *It was not possible that He should be held by death* (Act 2:24).

iii. The fact that Jesus remained God's **Holy One** despite the ordeal of the cross demonstrates that Jesus *bore the penalty* of human sin without *becoming a sinner* Himself. It also shows that this

payment of sins was perfect and complete, the only type of payment a **Holy One** could make. In these ways (as Peter understood), the resurrection *proves* the perfection of Jesus' work on the cross.

iv. We might imagine Jesus applying this promise to Himself in the agony before and during the crucifixion, and even afterwards. "It was as though our Lord had stayed his soul upon these words as He left this world and entered the unseen...He sang, as He went, this hymn of immortal hope." (Meyer)

d. **You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy:** With these words David seemed to understand that the benefits of this life commitment to God were received in both this life, and the life beyond.

i. The **path of life** is something enjoyed by the believer both now, and in eternity. God gives us eternal life to enjoy as a present gift, extending into eternity.

ii. **In Your presence is fullness of joy:** This was a joy David could experience now (in the context of his previously mentioned gladness and rejoicing), but also ultimately receive when in the more immediate **presence** of God.

iii. Peter also quoted these lines in his message on the Day of Pentecost. They show that instead of being punished for His glorious work on the cross, Jesus was *rewarded*, as prophetically described in this psalm.

e. **At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore:** David had full confidence that his life with God – both now and **forevermore** – would be marked by the highest and best **pleasures**. This is life lived above shallow entertainments and excitements.

i. These **pleasures** are enjoyed at a *place*: “We are also told that heaven is to be enjoyed at the right hand of God. The right hand, even on earth, is the place of favor, and the place of honor, and the place of security. The right-hand place is always regarded as the place of dignity and nobility in all courts. God is not going to give his people any left-handed heaven, but they are to dwell at his right hand for evermore.” (Spurgeon)

ii. **At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore:** This tells that both in this life and the life beyond, true **pleasures forevermore** are found at the **right hand** of God, not in separation from Him.

iii. In his fictional work *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis wrote in the voice of a senior devil, complaining about the “unfair advantage” that God has against the devils as they do their dark work: “He’s a hedonist at heart. All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a façade. Or only like foam on the sea shore. Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure. He makes no secret of it; at His right hand are ‘pleasures forevermore’. Ugh! I don’t think He has the least inkling of that high and austere mystery to which we rise in the Miserific Vision. He’s vulgar, Wormwood. He has a bourgeois mind. He has filled His world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least – sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be *twisted* before it’s any use to us. We fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally on our side.”

iv. The conclusion of this psalm is especially wonderful when we consider how it began. “The refugee of

verse 1 finds himself an heir, and his inheritance beyond all imagining and all exploring.” (Kidner)

v. When we go back to the first verse, we remember that this life of gladness and rejoicing and fullness of joy *is not* a problem-free life. It is a life that may be challenged and face attack on many levels. Yet in that a life commitment to God has been made and is enjoyed, it is a secure, happy, blessed life.

In the Shadow of Your Wings

Psa 17:1 Listen, O LORD, to my plea for justice; pay attention to my cry for help! Listen to my honest prayer.

Psa 17:2 You will judge in my favor, because you know what is right.

Psa 17:3 You know my heart. You have come to me at night; you have examined me completely and found no evil desire in me. I speak no evil,

Psa 17:4 as others do; I have obeyed your command and have not followed paths of violence.

Psa 17:5 I have always walked in your way and have never strayed from it.

Psa 17:6 I pray to you, O God, because you answer me; so turn to me and listen to my words.

Psa 17:7 Reveal your wonderful love and save me; at your side I am safe from my enemies.

Psa 17:8 Protect me as you would your very eyes; hide me in the shadow of your wings

Psa 17:9 from the attacks of the wicked. Deadly enemies surround me;

Psa 17:10 they have no pity and speak proudly.

Psa 17:11 They are around me now, wherever I turn, watching for a chance to pull me down.

Psa 17:12 They are like lions, waiting for me, wanting to tear me to pieces.

Psa 17:13 Come, LORD! Oppose my enemies and defeat them! Save me from the wicked by your sword;

Psa 17:14 save me from those who in this life have all they want. Punish them with the sufferings you have stored up for them; may there be enough for their children and some left over for their children's children!

Psa 17:15 But I will see you, because I have done no wrong; and when I awake, your presence will fill me with joy.

Psalms 17:1-15

Psalms 17 – Shelter Under the Shadow of His Wings

*The title of this psalm is simply **A Prayer of David**. We can't attach it to a specific time in David's life, because there are too many possible points where this connects with his general circumstances. This psalm is remarkable for its trust in God, its lack of confidence in self, and its glorious heavenly hope.*

A. A plea to be heard in time of crisis.

1. (1-2) David presents his cause to the LORD.

Hear a just cause, O LORD,

Attend to my cry;

Give ear to my prayer *which is* not from deceitful lips.

Let my vindication come from Your presence;

Let Your eyes look on the things that are upright.

a. **Hear a just cause, O LORD:** As is common in Psalms, David again prayed from a time of crisis. Here he began his appeal to God by declaring the *justice* of his **cause**. He believed God had every reason to **attend to** his **cry** because his **cause** was just.

i. It is entirely possible for someone to think that his cause is just when it is not; or for both parties in a fight to each be absolutely convinced that his own

cause is just. We cannot automatically apply these words of David to ourselves and immediately judge our cause as just.

ii. Yet we can look at our cause as impartially and dispassionately as possible, looking at it from the perspective of others to the best of our ability, and be more concerned with what is truly **just** than simply what favors us.

iii. "A cry is our earliest utterance, and in many ways the most natural of human sounds; if our prayer should like the infant's cry be more natural than intelligent, and more earnest than elegant, it will be none the less eloquent with God. There is a mighty power in a child's cry to prevail with a parent's heart." (Spurgeon)

b. Give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips: Even as David was convinced regarding the justice of his cause, he was also careful to speak honestly about his problem. The idea is that David has not deceived so as to deserve his current problem, and that he was not withholding facts that would undermine his cause.

i. In Psa 139:23-24, David prayed: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* This wonderful prayer – to know one's own heart and hidden motives and sins – is the kind of thing that David prayed *before* he prayed this psalm. He comes to God here with some confidence through a *tested* conscience.

ii. **Deceitful lips:** "They have Jacob's voice, but Esau's hands; they profess like saints, but practise like Satans; they have their long prayers, but short prayings." (Bales, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Let my vindication come from Your presence:** David did not want a vindication that came from *himself*. In his long struggle with King Saul, David had several opportunities to set things right himself, but he refused and waited until **vindication** came from the **presence** of God.

i. This was an important way that David left his problem to the LORD. "God, I refuse to take matters into my own hands. I will wait for **vindication** to **come from Your presence**; I want to know that this is Your work and not mine."

d. **Let Your eyes look on the things that are upright:** David phrased his request in a way that put more emphasis upon God's justice than on his own cause. He did believe that his cause was just; but he spoke in a manner that gave more importance to the **things that are upright**.

i. David's idea was something like this: "LORD, I believe my cause is just and I have searched my own heart for deceit. Yet I wait for Your vindication, and I want You to do and to promote what is right. If I'm not on Your side, move me so that I am."

ii. "I desire nothing that is unreasonable or unjust, but that thou wouldst judge righteously between me and mine enemies, and vindicate my own honour and faithfulness in making good thy promise to me."
(Poole)

2. (3-4) *A plea from a tested heart.*

**You have tested my heart;
You have visited *me* in the night;
You have tried me and have found nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.
Concerning the works of men,**

**By the word of Your lips,
I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.**

a. **You have tested my heart:** David *invited* the test in the previous verses; here he speaks as having *passed* the test (**You have tried me and have found nothing**).

i. Clarke assumes (probably rightly) that this psalm comes from the context of Saul hunting David. "Thou hast seen me in my most *secret* retirements, and knowest whether I have *plotted* mischief against him who now wishes to take away my life." (Clarke)

ii. It takes some level of patience and maturity to let God test one's heart in this manner. We must accept the fact that we might be wrong and that someone else may be right in the matter. We must be more interested in God's justice and His standard of right and wrong than we are in winning our cause. We must come to God and His word with a heart ready to be convicted and corrected.

iii. There are three questions for everyone to ask: "Do I allow God to test **my heart**? Can I be corrected? Will I listen to others when they tell me that I may be wrong?"

iv. David *did* allow God to test his heart, and therefore he came with great confidence in prayer. "Open and unconfessed sin is a great prayer barrier. An upright life is a strong basis for appeals." (Boice)

v. Boice suggests these questions for examining our heart before prayer:

- Are we being disobedient?
- Are we being selfish?
- Are we neglecting some important duty?

- Is there a wrong we should first make right?
- Are our priorities in order?

b. **I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress:** David was careful to not speak in a sinful way about his crisis. He could speak in a way that might deceive others or himself, and promote his own cause at the expense of God's justice; yet David **purposed** that it would not be so.

i. "The strong professions of heart-cleanness and outward obedience which follow are not so much denials of any sin as avowals of sincere devotion and honest submission of life to God's law." (Maclaren)

c. **By the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer:** This was one reason why David was good at this kind of strong self-analysis. He lived by the words of God's **lips**; he knew and loved and lived God's **word**.

i. It was this word that **tried** David and **found nothing**. It was this word that gave David the wisdom and the strength to keep **away from the paths of the destroyer**.

ii. David learned and displayed this lesson over and over again during his long crisis with King Saul. David had to protect himself, his family, and his men from Saul without becoming himself a twisted, self-interested **destroyer** like Saul.

B. A plea for protection.

1. (5) *Hold up my steps.*

**Uphold my steps in Your paths,
That my footsteps may not slip.**

a. **Uphold my steps:** David felt that he was in danger of falling or slipping into disaster; he needed God to hold up

his steps, so that his **footsteps may not slip**.

i. "The word of God affords us direction, but the grace of God must enable us to follow its direction, and that grace must be obtained by prayer." (Horne)

ii. "What! Slip in God's ways? Yes, the road is good, but our feet are evil, and therefore slip, even on the King's highway." (Spurgeon)

b. **In Your paths:** This again shows the significant humility of David's prayer. He wants to be upheld, but only on *God's paths*. Included in this is the unspoken prayer, "LORD, if I am not on Your path, please put me there. I want to be in **Your paths**, not my own."

2. (6-9) *Keep me safe by Your power.*

**I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God;
Incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech.**

Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand,

**O You who save those who trust in You
From those who rise up against them.**

Keep me as the apple of Your eye;

Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

From the wicked who oppress me,

From my deadly enemies who surround me.

a. **I have called upon You, for You will hear me:**

David's calm confidence in the midst of his crisis is encouraging. Though his problems were not gone yet, he still was confident that God would **hear** when he **called**.

i. Boice explained how this psalm is a great pattern of prayer. "It models prayer by the way the psalmist uses arguments to make his appeal to God. He does not merely ask for what he wants or needs. He argues his case, explaining to God what God should answer."

ii. We don't make such arguments in prayer because we can, through brilliant or persuasive arguments, convince God to do something that He doesn't really want to do. Instead, it is "because arguments force us to carefully think through what we are asking and to sharpen our requests." (Boice)

b. **Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand:** This is the first appearance in Psalms of the wonderful word, **lovingkindness**. David asked that this special love be shown to him by the special power of God (**Your right hand**).

i. Kidner on **lovingkindness**: "*Steadfast love*, or 'true love' (New English Bible) is that faithfulness to a covenant, to which marital devotion gives some analogy. It is the word which older versions translated 'lovingkindness', before its connection with covenanting and its strong element of fidelity were fully appreciated."

ii. "This is the love by which he enters into a favorable relationship with his people, promising to be their God." (Boice)

iii. Yet David spoke of more than **lovingkindness** here; he spoke of **marvelous lovingkindness**, and that **by Your right hand**. "The wonder of extraordinary love is that God should make it such an ordinary thing, that he should give to us 'marvellous lovingkindness,' and yet should give it so often that it becomes a daily blessing, and yet remains marvellous still." (Spurgeon)

iv. Many of us ask for or only expect God's *moderate* lovingkindness. We make our prayers, our faith, and our expectations small. David here shows us a pattern to expect and ask from God

marvellous lovingkindness.

v. "Do you not see that you have been a marvellous sinner? Marvellously ungrateful have you been; marvellously have you aggravated your sins; marvellously did you kick against a mother's tears; marvellously did you defy a father's counsels; marvellously have you laughed at death; marvellously have you made a covenant with death and a league with hell...'Oh!' saith he, 'God will never have mercy on me; it is too great a thing to hope, too great a wonder to expect!' Young man, here is a new prayer for you, 'Show thy marvellous loving-kindness.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **Keep me as the apple of Your eye:** The phrase "**apple of Your eye**" was used to describe something precious, easily injured and demanding protection. David wanted to be kept by God as if he were something *valuable* and even *fragile*.

i. "No part of the body more precious, more tender, and more carefully guarded than the eye; and of the eye, no portion more peculiarly to be protected than the central apple, the pupil, or as the Hebrew calls it, 'the daughter of the eye.' The all-wise Creator has placed the eye in a well-protected position; it stands surrounded by projecting bones like Jerusalem encircled by mountains. Moreover, its great Author has surrounded it with many tunics of inward covering, besides the hedge of the eyebrows, the curtain of the eyelids, and the fence of the eyelashes; and, in addition to this, he has given to every man so high a value for his eyes, and so quick an apprehension of danger, that no member of the body is more faithfully cared for than the organ of sight." (Spurgeon)

ii. This figure of speech is also used in Deu 32:10, Pro 7:2, and Zec 2:8. To be kept as the apple of the eye means:

- To be kept with many guards and protections.
- To *always* be kept safe.
- To be kept from the small things, like dust and grit.
- To always be kept sensitive and tender.
- To be kept clear and unobstructed.
- To be kept as something beautiful *and* eminently useful.

d. **Hide me under the shadow of Your wings:** This is another powerful figure of speech. The idea is of how a mother bird shields her young chicks from predators, from the elements, and from dangers by gathering them under her wings.

i. This figure of speech is also used in three other psalms (Psa 36:7; Psa 57:1; Psa 63:7). Jesus used this same word picture to show His love and desired care for Jerusalem in Mat 23:37.

ii. "Even as the parent bird completely shields her brood from evil, and meanwhile cherishes them with the warmth of her own heart, by covering them with her wings, so do thou with me, most condescending God, for I am thine offspring, and thou hast a parent's love in perfection." (Spurgeon)

iii. Taken together, these two phrases are powerful pictures of God's care for His people. "He who has so fenced and guarded that precious and tender part, the pupil of the eye, and who has provided for the security of a young and helpless brood under the wings of their dam, is here entreated to extend the

same providential care and parental love to the souls of his elect." (Horne)

e. **From the wicked who oppress me, from my deadly enemies who surround me:** The threat in David's life was *real*. He faced not only **oppression** that made his life difficult, but also **deadly enemies** who wanted to end his life.

i. In the midst of these real threats, David did the right thing: he *prayed*. "Fears that have become prayers are already more than half conquered." (Maclaren)

ii. Boice quotes a Bible teacher who had the habit of praying a certain prayer when he felt he was under attack: "Lord, your property is in danger."

3. (10-14) *Defeat my proud and arrogant enemies.*

**They have closed up their fat *hearts*;
With their mouths they speak proudly.
They have now surrounded us in our steps;
They have set their eyes, crouching down to the earth,
As a lion is eager to tear his prey,
And like a young lion lurking in secret places.
Arise, O LORD,
Confront him, cast him down;
Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword,
With Your hand from men, O LORD,
From men of the world *who have* their portion in *this* life,
And whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure.
They are satisfied with children,
And leave the rest of their *possession* for their babes.**

a. **They have closed up their fat hearts:** David here begins to describe the deadly enemies who oppressed

him so. They were insensitive (**fat hearts**), and spoke **proudly**.

i. "The meaning plainly is, that pride is the child of plenty, begotten by self-indulgence, which hardens the hearts of men against the fear of God, and the love of their neighbours.... Let every man take care, that, by pampering the flesh, he does not raise up an enemy of this stamp against himself." (Horne)

b. **Surrounded us in our steps...set their eyes...crouching down to the earth, as a lion:** David described the dangerous, wild, beast-like actions of his enemies. They would destroy him as a **lion** destroys its prey.

c. **Arise, O LORD, confront him, cast him down:** David declared his dependence on God to protect him. It wasn't because David was afraid of such lion-like enemies; as a young boy David had bested both the bear and the lion (1Sa 17:33-37). It was because David needed to see his enemy defeated by the hand of God, not the hand of David.

i. **Confront him:** "Hebrew, *prevent his face*, i.e., go forth against him, and meet and face him in battle, as enemies used to do." (Poole)

ii. This psalm has no firm connection to any particular recorded event in David's life, but it is not hard to see it belonging to the long period when Saul hunted David. During that time David refused to strike out against Saul when he had the opportunity, because he knew that *God* must strike against Saul, and not David himself.

d. **Deliver my life from the wicked...from men of the world who have their portion in this life:** David recognized that one characteristic of his enemies was

that they looked much more to **this life** than they did to eternity.

i. And, they may very well have had some satisfactions in this life: **whose belly You fill...they are satisfied with children, and leave the rest of their possession for their babes.** Spurgeon explained it like this: "Their sensual appetite gets the gain which it craved for. God gives to these swine the husks which they hunger for. A generous man does not deny dogs their bones; and our generous God gives even his enemies enough to fill them, if they were not so unreasonable as never to be content."

4. (15) *The settled confidence of prayer.*

**As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness;
I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.**

a. **As for me:** David here set himself in contrast to his enemies, who looked only to this life and not to eternity.

i. "This superb verse soars straight up from the prosperous lowlands of verse 14, where all was earthbound." (Kidner)

ii. "I do not envy this their felicity, but my hopes and happiness are of another nature. I do not place my portion in earthly and temporal treasures, as they do, but in *beholding God's face*." (Poole)

iii. "The smell of the furnace is upon the present psalm, but there is evidence in the last verse that he who wrote it came unharmed out of the flame." (Spurgeon)

b. **I will see Your face:** David was confident not only of life after death, but that he would one day **see the face** of God. The idea is not merely of *contact* with God, but of unhindered fellowship with God.

c. **See Your face in righteousness:** The idea is that David would have a righteousness that would enable him to see the face of God, to have this unhindered relationship with Him.

i. From a New Covenant perspective, we can say that this **righteousness** is the gift of God, granted to those who receive the person and work of Jesus by faith.

d. **I shall be satisfied when I awake:** David knew that the transition from this life to the next was like *waking*. He knew that the world beyond was *more* real and less dreamlike than our own.

i. We tend to think of heaven and its realities as an uncertain, cloudy dream world. In truth it is more real than our present environment, which by contrast will seem uncertain and cloudy when we **awake** in God's presence.

ii. "The moment is at hand when we shall awake and start up and declare ourselves fools for having counted dreams as realities, whilst we were oblivious to the eternal realities." (Meyer)

iii. Though David's focus was on eternity, this verse does not ignore the present day. There is a real sense in which these realities – closer fellowship with God, His righteousness in our life, a life truly awake, a life more and more conformed to His image – can in greater and greater measure be ours in this life. We should remember that eternal life begins *now*.

e. **When I awake in Your likeness:** David did not have a sophisticated understanding of heaven; one might say that no one in the Old Testament really did. Yet he did know that when he saw God's face, when he received His

righteousness, when he awoke in heaven's reality, that he would be **in** God's **likeness**.

i. David seemed to anticipate what Paul would write some 1,000 years later: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29)*. The destiny of God's people is to be conformed into the image of God, as perfectly displayed in Jesus Christ His Son.

ii. This – and perhaps only this – would make David **satisfied**. The implication is that he would never be **satisfied** until:

- He saw God's **face**, enjoying unhindered relationship with Him.
- He received God's **righteousness**.
- He would **awake** in and live in heaven's reality.
- He was conformed into God's **likeness**.

iii. "The mind will be satisfied with his truth, the heart with his love, the will with his authority. We shall need nothing else." (Meyer)

The Lord Is My Rock and My Fortress

Psa 18:1 How I love you, LORD! You are my defender.

Psa 18:2 The LORD is my protector; he is my strong fortress. My God is my protection, and with him I am safe. He protects me like a shield; he defends me and keeps me safe.

Psa 18:3 I call to the LORD, and he saves me from my enemies. Praise the LORD!

Psa 18:4 The danger of death was all around me; the waves of destruction rolled over me.

Psa 18:5 The danger of death was around me, and the grave set its trap for me.

Psa 18:6 In my trouble I called to the LORD; I called to my God for help. In his temple he heard my voice; he listened to my cry for help.

Psa 18:7 Then the earth trembled and shook; the foundations of the mountains rocked and quivered, because God was angry.

Psa 18:8 Smoke poured out of his nostrils, a consuming flame and burning coals from his mouth.

Psa 18:9 He tore the sky open and came down with a dark cloud under his feet.

Psa 18:10 He flew swiftly on his winged creature; he traveled on the wings of the wind.

Psa 18:11 He covered himself with darkness; thick clouds, full of water, surrounded him.

Psa 18:12 Hailstones and flashes of fire came from the lightning before him and broke through the dark clouds.

Psa 18:13 Then the LORD thundered from the sky; and the voice of the Most High was heard.

Psa 18:14 He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies; with flashes of lightning he sent them running.

Psa 18:15 The floor of the ocean was laid bare, and the foundations of the earth were uncovered, when you rebuked your enemies, LORD, and roared at them in anger.

Psa 18:16 The LORD reached down from above and took hold of me; he pulled me out of the deep waters.

Psa 18:17 He rescued me from my powerful enemies and from all those who hate me—they were too strong for me.

Psa 18:18 When I was in trouble, they attacked me, but the LORD protected me.

Psa 18:19 He helped me out of danger; he saved me because he was pleased with me.

Psa 18:20 The LORD rewards me because I do what is right; he blesses me because I am innocent.

Psa 18:21 I have obeyed the law of the LORD; I have not turned away from my God.

Psa 18:22 I have observed all his laws; I have not disobeyed his commands.

Psa 18:23 He knows that I am faultless, that I have kept myself from doing wrong.

Psa 18:24 And so he rewards me because I do what is right, because he knows that I am innocent.

Psa 18:25 O LORD, you are faithful to those who are faithful to you; completely good to those who are perfect.

Psa 18:26 You are pure to those who are pure, but hostile to those who are wicked.

Psa 18:27 You save those who are humble, but you humble those who are proud.

Psa 18:28 O LORD, you give me light; you dispel my darkness.

Psa 18:29 You give me strength to attack my enemies and power to overcome their defenses.

Psa 18:30 This God—how perfect are his deeds! How dependable his words! He is like a shield for all who seek his protection.

Psa 18:31 The LORD alone is God; God alone is our defense.

Psa 18:32 He is the God who makes me strong, who makes my pathway safe.

Psa 18:33 He makes me sure-footed as a deer; he keeps me safe on the mountains.

Psa 18:34 He trains me for battle, so that I can use the strongest bow.

Psa 18:35 O LORD, you protect me and save me; your care has made me great, and your power has kept me safe.

Psa 18:36 You have kept me from being captured, and I have never fallen.

Psa 18:37 I pursue my enemies and catch them; I do not stop until I destroy them.

Psa 18:38 I strike them down, and they cannot rise; they lie defeated before me.

Psa 18:39 You give me strength for the battle and victory over my enemies.

Psa 18:40 You make my enemies run from me; I destroy those who hate me.

Psa 18:41 They cry for help, but no one saves them; they call to the LORD, but he does not answer.

Psa 18:42 I crush them, so that they become like dust which the wind blows away. I trample on them like mud in the streets.

Psa 18:43 You saved me from a rebellious people and made me ruler over the nations; people I did not know have now become my subjects.

Psa 18:44 Foreigners bow before me; when they hear me, they obey.

Psa 18:45 They lose their courage and come trembling from their fortresses.

Psa 18:46 The LORD lives! Praise my defender! Proclaim the greatness of the God who saves me.

Psa 18:47 He gives me victory over my enemies; he subdues the nations under me

Psa 18:48 and saves me from my foes. O LORD, you give me victory over my enemies and protect me from violent people.

Psa 18:49 And so I praise you among the nations; I sing praises to you.

Psa 18:50 God gives great victories to his king; he shows constant love to the one he has chosen, to David and his descendants forever.

Psalms 18:1-50

Psalms 18 – Great Praise from a Place of Great Victory

*This is a long psalm; there are only three psalms longer in the entire collection (78, 89, and 119). Its length is well suited to its theme, as described in the title. The title itself is long, with only one longer in the psalter (Psalms 60): **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all of his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said:***

*In the title David tells us whom the psalm was written for: God Himself, who is **the Chief Musician**. He tells us more about himself, that we should consider him **the servant of the LORD**. He tells us the occasion for the writing of the psalm – possibly not only the immediate aftermath of Saul's death (described in 1 Samuel 31; 2 Samuel 1), but also of the period leading to David's enthronement (2 Samuel 2-5). He tells us also something about Saul, who out of great, undeserved kindness on David's part, is not explicitly counted among the enemies of David (**from the hand of all of his enemies and from the hand of Saul**).*

This psalm is virtually the same as the psalm sung by David at the very end of his life, as recorded in 2 Samuel 22. It is likely that David composed this song as a younger man; yet in his old age David could look back with great gratitude and sing this song again, looking at his whole life.

A. God's past deliverance for David.

1. (1-3) David praises the God of his deliverance.

I will love You, O LORD, my strength.

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my

**deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my
stronghold.
I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy to be
praised*;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.**

a. **I will love You, O LORD:** This was a triumphant declaration made in a season of great triumph. It is true that David *decided* to love the LORD, but even more true that he simply felt *compelled* to love the LORD who delivered him so wonderfully.

i. Since he was taken from the sheepfold and anointed the future king of Israel, David had lived some 20 or so years as a fugitive, and as a man who had lost everything. He lost his safety, he lost his youth, he lost his family, he lost his career, he lost his rights, he lost his connection with the covenant people of God, he lost his comforts, and at times he even lost his close relationship with God. Despite all, he remained steadfast to the Lord, and God – in His timing – delivered David and fulfilled the long-ago promise of his anointing.

ii. In saying, “**I will love You,**” David used a somewhat unusual word. “This word for *love* is an uncommon one, impulsive and emotional. Found elsewhere only in its intensive forms, it usually expresses the compassionate love of the stronger for the weaker.” (Boice)

iii. “Hebrew, I will love thee dearly and entirely...from the very heart-root.” (Trapp)

iv. “The precluding invocation in vv. 1-3 at once touches the high-water mark of Old Testament devotion, and is conspicuous among its noblest

utterances. Nowhere else in Scripture is the form of the word employed which is here used for 'love.' It has special depth and tenderness." (Maclaren)

v. David said, "**I will love You**" to the God who delivered him, not only for rescuing him *from* his trial, but for all God did in and through the trials to make him what he was. David wasn't bitter against God, as if he said, "Well, it's about time You delivered me." Instead he was grateful that the years of trouble had done something good and necessary in his life.

b. **The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer**: David knew this to be true before, but he knew it by *faith*. Now David sang from a perspective that knew this by experience in a greater way than ever before.

i. When David said, "**The LORD is my rock**," he likely meant it in more than one sense. A rock was of help to the ancient Judean in several ways.

- It could provide essential shade, always needed in the merciless sun and heat of the desert (as in Isa 32:2).
- It could provide shelter and protection in its cracks and crevasses (as in Exo 33:22 and Pro 30:26).
- It could provide a firm place to stand and fight, as opposed to sinking sand (as in Psa 40:2).

c. **My God, my strength, in whom I will trust**: David knew the triumph of God's **strength** over the *long* trial. Many people fall under the excruciating *length* of an extended season of trial, and David *almost* did (1 Samuel 27; 1 Samuel 29-30).

i. That fact that David saw his God as his **strength** reminds us of the promise later expressed through

Paul: *Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (Eph 6:10).

d. **My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold:** As David listed honoring name for God upon honoring name (we can count nine just in these first few verses), we get the feeling of a *flood* of praise and emotion from David. He can't say enough about who God is and the great things He has done for David.

i. It is revealing that David can speak so eloquently about his God and what God has done for him. As Maclaren says, "The whole is one long, loving accumulation of dear names." This means that David both *knew* God and had *experienced* God.

ii. In these nine titles, we see what God was for David:

- His **strength**, the One who empowered him to survive against and defeat his enemies.
- His **rock**, which indicates a place of shelter, safety, and a secure standing.
- His **fortress**, a place of strength and safety.
- His **deliverer**, the One who made a way of escape for him.
- His **God**, "my *strong God*, not only the object of my adoration, but he who puts strength in my soul." (Clarke)
- His **strength**, but this uses a different Hebrew word than in Psa 18:1. According to Clarke, the idea behind this word is *fountain, source, origin*.
- His **shield**, who defends both his head and his heart.
- His **horn**, meaning his strength and defense.

- His **stronghold**, his high tower of refuge where he could see an enemy from a great distance and be protected from the adversary.

iii. "When he was conscious that the object of his worship was such as he has pointed out in the above *nine* particulars, it is no wonder that he resolves to *call upon him*; and no wonder that he expects, in consequence, to be saved from his enemies; for who can destroy him whom such a God undertakes to save?" (Clarke)

e. **I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies:** In previous psalms David cried out to God from times of intense crisis; now he cries out to God with the same strength to praise Him for His deliverance. It is sad to say that many are far more passionate in asking for help than they ever are in giving thanks or praise.

i. The thought, "**So shall I be saved from my enemies**" did not always come easily for David. Not very long before this great season of victory, he said to himself: *Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines (1Sa 27:1)*. This shows that there were times when David deeply doubted the final victory he now enjoyed; but it also shows that in the end, his faith – and more importantly, God's strength – was greater than his weakness.

ii. Therefore, at this point, it is all a song of praise for David. "To be saved singing is to be saved indeed. Many are saved mourning and doubting; but David had such faith that he could fight singing, and win the battle with a song still on his lips." (Spurgeon)

2. (4-6) *The danger that made David cry out to the LORD.*

**The pangs of death surrounded me,
And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.
The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears.**

a. **The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid:** David described two threats: first, the threat of **death**, and second the **floods of ungodliness**. The overwhelming presence of **ungodliness** was a significant trial to David.

i. This reminds us that despite the fact that David was a true warrior, he was also a sensitive soul who was troubled by the deeds and words of the ungodly.

b. **The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me:** This was another way of saying that David was threatened with death. **Sheol** is another word for the grave or death.

c. **He heard my voice from His temple:** This was long before the later building of the temple in the days of Solomon. The city of Jerusalem wasn't even in Israeli control at the time David wrote this (not until 2Sa 5:6-10). Yet David knew that *God* had a **temple**, a heavenly temple that was the model for the tabernacle and the later temple (Exo 25:9; Exo 25:40), and that God heard prayer from heaven.

i. What did God hear **from His temple**? God heard David's cry (**cried out to my God**). "This same poor man cried, and the cry set Jehovah's activity in motion. The deliverance of a single soul may seem a small thing, but if the single soul has prayed it is no longer small, for God's good name is involved." (Maclaren)

3. (7-15) The majestic deliverance God brought to David.

**Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of the hills also quaked and were
shaken,
Because He was angry.
Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.
He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With darkness under His feet.
And He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
He flew upon the wings of the wind.
He made darkness His secret place;
His canopy around Him was dark waters
And thick clouds of the skies.
From the brightness before Him,
His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of
fire.**

**The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe,
Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.
Then the channels of the sea were seen,
The foundations of the world were uncovered
At Your rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.**

a. **Then the earth shook and trembled:** David describes the dramatic deliverance God brought to him. It was marked by earthquakes, the indignation of God (**He was angry**), **smoke** and **fire**, and the personal intervention of God (**He rode upon a cherub, and flew**).

i. "When a monarch is angry, and prepares for war, his whole kingdom is instantly in commotion.

Universal nature is here represented as feeling the effects of its sovereign's displeasure, and all the visible elements are disordered." (Horne)

ii. **Smoke went up from His nostrils:** "A violent [Middle Eastern] method of expressing fierce wrath. Since the breath from the nostrils is heated by strong emotion, the figure portrays the Almighty Deliverer as pouring forth smoke in the heat of his wrath and the impetuosity of his zeal." (Spurgeon)

iii. **He rode upon a cherub, and flew:** David here emphasized the *speed* of God's deliverance. "As swiftly as the wind. He came to my rescue with all speed." (Poole) We may fairly wonder if it seemed speedy to David at the time.

iv. This terminology of David emphasizes the judgment of God; but since the judgment is directed against David's enemies, it means deliverance for David. God won this victory against David's *strong enemy*, against those *who hated* David (Psa 18:16-17).

v. There is a larger principle here: understanding that deliverance for a righteous person or people often means judgment against those who oppress them.

b. **The LORD thundered from heaven:** David set phrase upon phrase in describing the great work of God on his behalf. According to David's description, God moved heaven, sky, earth, and sea to deliver David.

i. When David described help coming to him through earthquakes, thunder, storms, and lightning, he clearly used poetic images from the way God delivered Israel from Egypt, at Mount Sinai, and during the conquest of Canaan under Joshua. Yet it is also entirely possible – if not probable – that he also

literally saw such phenomenon sent from God to protect and fight for him. Though such events are not recorded in 1 or 2 Samuel, we remember that there were long periods of David's life (such as when he was hunted as a fugitive from Saul) of which we have few descriptions of events. He must have experienced God's deliverance again and again in a variety of ways.

ii. The way David describes it all leaves us with two impressions. First, he really believed those things happened as recorded in the Bible. Second, he saw the same God do similar things for him in his own day.

iii. Significantly, we might say that David could only really see this *once his deliverance was accomplished*. In the midst of his trial, David had many reasons and occasions to wonder where the delivering hand of God was. God's deliverance is always seen most clearly looking back; looking forward it is often only seen by faith.

4. (16-19) David set in safety.

**He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.**

a. **He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy:** David felt that he was drowning when the strong hand of God picked him **out of many waters**. Like a man caught up in a

flood, David knew that his enemies **were too strong for** him, but that God could deliver him.

i. "Some will not see the hand of God, but I warrant you, brethren, those who have been delivered out of the deep waters will see it. Their experience teaches them that God is yet among us." (Spurgeon)

b. **He also brought me out into a broad place:** The strong hand of God not only plucked David from the flood, but it also set him in a safe place.

c. **He delivered me because He delighted in me:** We can say that David meant this in two ways. First, he **delighted in** David in the sense that He chose him, anointed him, and set His *marvelous lovingkindness* (Psa 17:7) upon David. Second, he **delighted in** David because he lived a righteous life, as explained in the following verses.

i. "Deliverance from sin, deliverance from evil propensities, deliverance from spiritual enemies – each deliverance bears evidence of God's love to us.... How much he delights in you it is not possible to say. The Father delights in you, and looks upon you with doting love; like as a father takes pleasure in his child, so does he rejoice over you." (Spurgeon)

5. (20-24) *God delivered David because of his righteousness.*

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;

According to the cleanness of my hands

He has recompensed me.

For I have kept the ways of the LORD,

And have not wickedly departed from my God.

For all His judgments *were* before me,

And I did not put away His statutes from me.

**I was also blameless before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according
to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.**

a. **The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness:** During his long season of affliction under Saul, David was challenged to respond in unrighteous ways. He had many opportunities to strike out against Saul as a matter of self-defense. Yet David consistently conducted himself in **righteousness** and knew that God **rewarded** him because of it.

b. **I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.... I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity:** This was not a claim of sinless perfection on David's part. In fact, the year or so before the death of King Saul was spent in some significant measure of spiritual and moral compromise (1 Samuel 27; 1 Samuel 29-30). Yet through it all David kept a core of integrity toward God, was correctable despite his failings, and most importantly did not fail in the greatest test: to not give in to the temptation to gain the throne through killing or undermining Saul.

i. We believe this psalm – twice recorded in Scripture, with minor variations, both here and in 2 Samuel 22 – actually speaks from two contexts. Here, according to the title, it was sung first from David's victory over Saul and receiving of the throne of Israel. In 2 Samuel 22 David sang it as a grateful retrospect over his entire life. He can say "**I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God**" in both contexts, but with somewhat different meaning. It meant one thing to say it *before*

his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah; it was another thing to say it *after* that sin.

ii. Spurgeon explained how the statement could be true both before and after the scandal with Bathsheba: "Before God the man after God's own heart was a humble sinner, but before his slanderers he could with unblushing face speak of the '*cleanness of his hands*' and the righteousness of his life."

iii. Nevertheless, we can largely agree with Adam Clarke: "The times in which David was most afflicted were the times of his greatest uprightness. *Adversity* was always to him a time of spiritual prosperity."

c. **I kept myself from my iniquity:** Some think this is arrogance or pride on David's part. Spurgeon quotes one commentator who protested, "Kept himself! Who made man his own keeper?" Yet we know there is certainly a sense in which we must keep ourselves from sin, even as Paul spoke of a man cleansing himself for God's glory and for greater service (2Ti 2:21).

i. We may see a *personal danger* in the words, **my iniquity**. It shows that there is iniquity in every person, and that we must be on special guard against our own tendencies to sin, to practice **iniquity**. It is true that all we like sheep have gone astray; but we have also turned each one to our *own* way. Our iniquity may be in us from birth; it may have been educated into us by a bad family or by bad company. Our iniquity may come to us through temptations, through adversity, or through prosperity – even by our blessings.

ii. These words of David also tell us of a *special guard*. David was determined to **keep** himself from his iniquity. "Be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome. There is

nothing like hanging it up by the neck, that very sin, I mean. Do not fire at sin indiscriminately; but, if thou hast one sin that is more to thee than another, drag it out from the crowd, and say, 'Thou must die if no other does. I will hang thee up in the face of the sun.'" (Spurgeon)

iii. One may object: "Yet David *did not* keep himself from his iniquity, and some years after this he sinned with Bathsheba, and he grievously sinned against Uriah." That is true, and David was disciplined greatly for that sin. Nevertheless, we never hear of him sinning in a similar way *after* his repentance from that terrible transgression. There is a real sense in which after his repentance, David *did* keep himself from his iniquity. As Benjamin Franklin wrote: "Many princes sin with David, but few repent with him."

d. **Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness:** David resisted the remarkably strong temptation to depose Saul and take the throne promised to him by either violence or intrigue. This was the consistent expression of **righteousness** that the LORD rewarded by giving David a throne that could not be taken *from him*.

i. David here simply testified to his clean conscience, which is a good and wonderful thing. "A godly man has a clear conscience, and knows himself to be upright; is he to deny his own consciousness, and to despise the work of the Holy Ghost, by hypocritically making himself out to be worse than he is?" (Spurgeon)

6. (25-27) *An abiding principle of God's dealing with man.*

**With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;
With a blameless man You will show Yourself
blameless;**

**With the pure You will show Yourself pure;
And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.
For You will save the humble people,
But will bring down haughty looks.**

a. **With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful:** David understood a basic principle of God's dealing with men; that God often treats a man in the same way that man treats others.

i. Jesus explained this principle in the Sermon on the Mount: *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you (Mat 7:2)*. Human nature wants to use a *small* measure of mercy with others, but wants a *large* measure of mercy from God. Jesus told us to expect the same measure from God that we give to others.

ii. "Note that even the merciful need mercy; no amount of generosity to the poor, or forgiveness to enemies, can set us beyond the need of mercy." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The attitude of God towards men is created by their attitude towards Him." (Morgan) This principle works in a positive way; those who show great mercy are given great mercy. It also works in a negative way: **with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd**. One illustration of this was how God used the **shrewd** Laban to educate the **devious** Jacob (Genesis 27-28).

iv. It is significant that this appears in the psalm that celebrates David's victory over Saul. Both sides of this principle (God's dealing with the **merciful** and the **devious**) were mightily illustrated in the lives of David and Saul through their ongoing conflict.

v. Translators have had trouble with the second half of Psa 18:26, because it communicates a difficult concept. It's easy say that if a man is pure toward God, then God will be pure to him. But you can't say that if a man is wicked toward God, then God will be wicked toward him, because God can't do wickedness. So, "David expresses the second half of the parallel by a somewhat ambiguous word, the root meaning of which is 'twisted.' The verse actually says, 'To the twisted (or crooked) you will show yourself twisted (or crooked)'.... The idea seems to be that if a person insists in going devious ways in his dealings with God, God will outwit him, as that man deserves." (Boice)

vi. Lev 26:23-24 promises such a thing: *And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins.*

b. **You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks:** God loves to give grace to the humble, and likewise resists the proud (Jas 4:6; 1Pe 5:5).

i. **Humble people:** The idea behind the Hebrew word *ani* refers to the poor, afflicted, and needy ones. God's care for these **humble people** is found in several psalms (Psa 10:2; Psa 22:24; Psa 35:10; Psa 68:10), though the Hebrew word *ani* may be translated differently in different places.

B. God's present and future power for David.

1. (28-30) *God gives His light and word to empower David.*

**For You will light my lamp;
The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.
For by You I can run against a troop,
By my God I can leap over a wall.**

**As for God, His way is perfect;
The word of the LORD is proven;
He is a shield to all who trust in Him.**

a. **For You will light my lamp:** David now moves from joyful thanks for the past to confidence in the future. The same God who brought him to the throne would give him the **light** he needed to rule and **enlighten** his **darkness**.

b. **For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall:** This gives thanks for past victories, and thanks God for present strength. One might think that after the 20-some years of living as a fugitive from Saul, David would simply be exhausted. This was not the case; God empowering him, he felt strong enough to accomplish superhuman feats.

i. *"By thee I have broken through the armed troops of mine enemies. I have scaled the walls of their strongest cities and castles, and so taken them."* (Poole)

ii. "With faith, how easy all exploits become! When we have no faith, though, to fight with enemies, and overcome difficulties, is hard work indeed; but, when we have faith, oh, how easy our victories! What does the believer do? There is a troop, – well, he runs in faith, then, to fight with enemies, and overcome difficulties is hard wall, what about that? He leaps over it. It is amazing how easy life becomes when a man has faith. Does faith diminish difficulties? Oh, no, it increaseth them; but it increaseth his strength to overcome them. If thou hast faith, thou shalt have trials; but thou shalt do great exploits, endure great privations, and get triumphant victories." (Spurgeon)

c. **His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven:** David spoke of the great things he could do as

empowered by God, but he came back to the thought of the greatness of God. He considered the perfection of **His way**, and the **proven** character of His **word**.

i. **The word of the LORD is proven:** “Literally *tried in the fire*. It has stood all tests; and has never failed those who pleaded it before its author.” (Clarke)

ii. David could say “**the word of the LORD is proven**” from his personal experience. The word given to David – that he would be the next king of Israel, plus hundreds of smaller promises – had been **proven** true.

iii. Many do not know this from their own experience because they will never allow themselves to be put in a situation where God *must* prove His word true. David knew the truth of this from the extreme circumstances of his life.

2. (31-36) *God gives David strength and skill.*

**For who *is* God, except the LORD?
And who *is* a rock, except our God?
It is God who arms me with strength,
And makes my way perfect.
He makes my feet like the *feet of deer*,
And sets me on my high places.
He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.**

**You have also given me the shield of Your salvation;
Your right hand has held me up,
Your gentleness has made me great.
You enlarged my path under me,
So my feet did not slip.**

a. **For who is God, except the LORD?** David here celebrated the reality of the God of Israel against the illusions of the gods of the nations. The Philistines, the

Moabites, the Edomites, and all the rest had their gods; but only Yahweh (**the LORD**) is **God**.

i. "Vain were the idols of the ancient world, Baal and Jupiter; as vain are those of modern times – pleasure, honour, and profit. They cannot bestow content, or make their votaries happy below; much less can they deliver from death, or open the everlasting doors above." (Horne)

b. **It is God who arms me with strength.... He makes my feet like the feet of deer:** David knew by experience the **strength** of God given to him, and also the skill to use such strength. This skill was like the skill that **deer** have, who can run effortlessly upon the **high places**.

i. David sang about the way God helped him make war (as in 2 Samuel 8). God gave him **strength**, helped him run swiftly and on a secure path (**makes my way perfect...feet like the feet of deer**), made him strong enough to **bend a bow of bronze**, and gave him **the shield of Your salvation**. As a warrior, David knew God as one who helped him make war triumphantly. As God gave David what he needed (physical strength and skill), God will also give us what we need.

ii. Kidner suggests that the **bow of bronze** was actually a wooden bow that was reinforced with metal.

c. **Your right hand has held me up; Your gentleness has made me great:** David was held by the *strength and skill* of God's **right hand**, and made **great** by the **gentleness** of God.

i. We don't often think of someone being made **great** by the **gentleness** of God. It is easy to

underestimate the power of God's **gentleness**, and we often want a more evidently spectacular work from God. Yet David – this great warrior – received from and responded to the **gentleness** of God.

ii. We can say this was the **gentleness** of God in at least two respects. It was the **gentleness** that God *showed to* David, and the **gentleness** that David *learned from* God and *showed to* others. "While it was the gentleness God exercised that allowed David his success, it was the gentleness God taught him that was his true greatness." (Kidner)

iii. God had shown His gentleness to David in many ways, and there were even more ways after his victory over Saul and taking of the throne.

- God's gentleness was great to David when he was a despised member of his family, neglected, ignored, tending the sheep in solitude.
- God's gentleness was great to David when He consoled his soul when Saul began to envy and hate him.
- God's gentleness was great to David when He gave him a friend like Jonathan.
- God's gentleness was great to David when He allowed him to have the holy bread at the tabernacle as he was fleeing from Saul.
- God's gentleness was great to David when He told Abigail about Nabal, thereby keeping David from slaughtering a foolish man and his family.
- God's gentleness was great to David when He granted him the self-control to spare Saul's life – *twice*.

- God's gentleness was great to David when He protected him even when he was foolish, such as when he acted like a madman in the court of a Philistine ruler.
- God's gentleness was great to David when He prevented him fighting on behalf of the Philistines against Saul and Israel.
- God's gentleness was great to David when He comforted him after David had lost all at Ziklag; where David encouraged himself in the LORD and afterwards recovered all.

iv. We notice also what this **gentleness** of God did: it made David **great**. We can say that the **gentleness** of God makes every believer **great** also, more than they often consider.

- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their royal birth; who has a greater claim to royal birth than the son or daughter of the King of Kings?

- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their election; what greater election is there than to be the elect of God?

- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their wealth; who has greater riches than the children and heirs of the God who owns all?

- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their victories; who has achieved greater victory than the one who is in unity with Jesus Christ, the greatest champion of all?

- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their influence; who has greater influence than the child of God who can move the hand of God with his faithful and righteous prayers?

- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their discoveries; who has discovered anything greater than the nature of the infinite and eternal God?
- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their history; who has a greater heritage than a member of the body of Christ as it spans through the ages and generations?
- In this world, some people are thought to be great because of their destiny; who has a more glorious and amazing destiny than the heirs of His glory, those who are His own inheritance?

3. (37-42) *God gives David victory over his enemies.*

**I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them;
Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.
I have wounded them,
So that they could not rise;
They have fallen under my feet.
For You have armed me with strength for the battle;
You have subdued under me those who rose up
against me.
You have also given me the necks of my enemies,
So that I destroyed those who hated me.
They cried out, but *there was* none to save;
Even to the LORD, but He did not answer them.
Then I beat them as fine as the dust before the wind;
I cast them out like dirt in the streets.**

a. **I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them:**
Here David had in mind those other than Saul. David knew that as King of Israel he would have to face enemies from surrounding nations, and here he celebrated the past victories God gave him against his **enemies**.

b. Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.... You have also given me the necks of my enemies: David fought as a true warrior, and sought to utterly defeat the enemies of Israel on the field of battle. He properly believed that God gave him the victory over these enemies.

i. "Thou hast made me a complete conqueror. *Treading on the neck* of an enemy was the triumph of the conqueror, and the utmost disgrace of the vanquished." (Clarke)

ii. "Of David we may say, as one did of Julius Caesar, you may perceive him to have been an excellent soldier by his very language; for he wrote with the same spirit he fought." (Trapp)

4. (43-49) God establishes David's throne.

You have delivered me from the strivings of the people;

You have made me the head of the nations;

A people I have not known shall serve me.

As soon as they hear of me they obey me;

The foreigners submit to me.

The foreigners fade away,

And come frightened from their hideouts.

The LORD lives!

Blessed be my Rock!

Let the God of my salvation be exalted.

***It is* God who avenges me,**

And subdues the peoples under me;

He delivers me from my enemies.

You also lift me up above those who rise against me;

You have delivered me from the violent man.

Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles,

And sing praises to Your name.

a. **You have delivered me from the strivings of the people:** David knew that taking the throne of Israel was more than just a matter of removing Saul. There were also the **strivings of the people**, of those who did not immediately support David as king over a united Israel (2 Samuel 2-5).

b. **You have made me the head of the nations; a people I have not known shall serve me:** David also knew that God would raise him up not only as the King of Israel, but as a regional power with authority over neighboring nations who brought him tribute.

i. Isa 55:3-5 (and other passages) tell us that this promise will have an even greater fulfillment in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ, when David will be the king over the millennial Israel, which will be exalted above the other nations of the earth.

ii. **As soon as they hear of me they obey me:** We could say that Psa 18:44 tells us how we should obey Jesus. This not only tells us of the obligation of the believer, but also that one *can* immediately come to Jesus Christ, be converted, and live obediently to God. No probation period is necessary.

iii. "If any of you have thought that trusting Christ does not involve obeying him, you have made a great mistake. They do very wrong who cry up believing in Christ, and yet depreciate obedience to him, for obeying is believing in another form, and springs out of believing." (Spurgeon)

c. **The LORD lives! Blessed be my Rock:** All of this made David love and honor the LORD more than ever. He gave praise to God for the great things He had done. He had truly **delivered** David **from the violent man**, most notably the murderous Saul who hunted him.

i. "If we begin with 'The Lord is my Rock,' we shall end with 'Blessed be my Rock.'" (Maclaren)

d. **Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name:** On one level, this was David praising God for his deliverance and safety among his neighboring kingdoms. On a second level, Paul quotes this in Rom 15:8-12 as the first of four Old Testament prophecies demonstrating that the work of Jesus Christ was not only for the Jewish people, but for the Gentiles also.

i. "And therefore David is here transported beyond himself, even to his seed forever, as it is expressed in Psa 18:50, and speaks this in special relation to Christ." (Poole)

ii. "While David may have thought only of Yahweh's fame spread abroad, his words at their full value portray the Lord's anointed (Psa 18:50), ultimately the Messiah, praising Him *among* – in fellowship with – a host of Gentile worshippers." (Kidner)

iii. "At this point we are encouraged to look back over the entire psalm for messianic meanings." (Boice) We can see many pictures of Jesus and His work in this psalm:

- Psa 18:1-6 suggests His death (*the pangs of death encompassed me...the sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me*).

- Psa 18:7-18 suggests His resurrection (*the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken.... He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy*).

- Psa 18:19-27 suggests His exaltation (*I have kept the ways of the LORD.... I was also blameless before*

Him.... Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness).

- Psa 18:28-42 suggests His victory (*For by You I can run against a troop.... I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them*). Jesus was strong enough to run against a troop and be victorious; the enemies against Jesus were strong and disciplined; yet Christ confronted them and defeated them. Jesus was great enough to jump over a wall: the wall of God's holy law that separated us from Him. He didn't destroy the wall; instead with His holy life He jumped over it and fulfilled the law on our behalf.

- Psa 18:43-50 suggests His kingdom (*You have made me the head of the nations.... The foreigners submit to me.... You also lift me up above those who rise against me.... Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles*).

iv. While the use of Psa 18:49 in Rom 15:9 does show that the Holy Spirit spoke of Jesus and His work here, it also has a unique application to David himself. "There is a sense in which it applies particularly to David, well observed by *Theodoret*: 'We see,' says he, 'evidently the fulfilment of this prophecy; for even to the present day David praises the Lord among the Gentiles by the mouth of true believers; seeing there is not a town, village, hamlet, country, nor even a desert, where Christians dwell, in which God is not praised by their singing the Psalms of David.'" (Clarke)

5. (50) God blesses His anointed king.

**Great deliverance He gives to His king,
And shows mercy to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forevermore.**

a. **Great deliverance He gives to His king:** David could say this with confidence, not only that God would give him **deliverance**, but also more importantly that he was **His king**. David knew this because he did all that he could to make sure that *he* did not seize or usurp the throne. He let God give it to him in time. David therefore had the blessed benefit of knowing that he was *God's* king, and not one of his own making.

b. **And shows mercy to His anointed:** David perhaps thought back some 20 years before, when he was first **anointed** for the throne that he now received. It had been a long, but important journey between the time of his anointing and his receiving the throne.

c. **To David and his descendants forevermore:** Here David understood something by either intuition or by faith, something that would not be specifically promised to him until later. The promise was that David (and not Saul) would begin a hereditary monarchy in Israel, and that **his descendants** would also sit on the throne of Israel. This was the promise to build a house for David that God explicitly made in 2Sa 7:1-17.

The Law of the Lord Is Perfect

Psa 19:1 How clearly the sky reveals God's glory! How plainly it shows what he has done!

Psa 19:2 Each day announces it to the following day; each night repeats it to the next.

Psa 19:3 No speech or words are used, no sound is heard;

Psa 19:4 yet their message goes out to all the world and is heard to the ends of the earth. God made a home in the sky for the sun;

Psa 19:5 it comes out in the morning like a happy bridegroom, like an athlete eager to run a race.

Psa 19:6 It starts at one end of the sky and goes across to the other. Nothing can hide from its heat.

Psa 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect; it gives new strength. The commands of the LORD are trustworthy, giving wisdom to those who lack it.

Psa 19:8 The laws of the LORD are right, and those who obey them are happy. The commands of the LORD are just and give understanding to the mind.

Psa 19:9 Reverence for the LORD is good; it will continue forever. The judgments of the LORD are just; they are always fair.

Psa 19:10 They are more desirable than the finest gold; they are sweeter than the purest honey.

Psa 19:11 They give knowledge to me, your servant; I am rewarded for obeying them.

Psa 19:12 None of us can see our own errors; deliver me, LORD, from hidden faults!

Psa 19:13 Keep me safe, also, from willful sins; don't let them rule over me. Then I shall be perfect and free from the evil of sin.

Psa 19:14 May my words and my thoughts be acceptable to you, O LORD, my refuge and my redeemer!

Psalms 19:1-14

Psalms 19 – The Heavens, the Word, and the Glory of God

*The title tells us both the author and the audience of the psalm: **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** Some believe that the Chief Musician is the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6).*

"This Psalm reflects, more than any other, the beauty and splendor of the Hebrew poetry found in the Psalter. C.S. Lewis wrote, 'I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.'" (Willem VanGemeren)

A. The message from the heavens.

1. (1-4a) The message from the heavens is broad.

**The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.
Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.**

a. **The heavens declare the glory of God:** David looked to the heavens – not the spiritual heaven where God is enthroned, but the heavens of the blue sky and the night sky – and he clearly saw **the glory of God** declared.

i. He could see it in the blue sky, with the glory of the sun and clouds and the beauty of sunrises and sunsets.

ii. He could see it in the night sky, with the brightness of the moon, the awe of the starry sky and the cloudy spread of the distant galaxies.

iii. These together – with their size, their awe, their grandeur – shouted to David and all who would see, "The God who created all this is glorious, and this is evidence of His glory."

- He is glorious in His size, having created something so big.

- He is glorious in His engineering, having created something that works together so well.
- He is glorious in His artistry, having created something so beautiful.
- He is glorious in His goodness and kindness, having created something for all humanity to see.

b. **And the firmament shows His handiwork:** David repeated the idea in the previous line. "**Firmament**" is a poetic way of referring to the heavens or the sky, and they show the **handiwork** of God.

c. **Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge:** The day sky and the night sky speak to us, and reveal knowledge about the glory, wisdom, and creative greatness of God.

i. **Utters speech:** "This is stronger in the Hebrew text than it appears to be in English, for the image is literally of a gushing spring that copiously pours forth sweet, refreshing waters of revelation." (Boice)

ii. **Reveals knowledge:** "*Knowledge* is well matched with *night*, since without the night skies man would have known, until recently, nothing but an empty universe." (Kidner) If God had not placed the stars in the night sky, the blackness of night would have communicated powerfully to all humanity, ancient and modern, "There is nothing and no one out there."

iii. "Though all preachers on earth should grow silent, and every human mouth cease from publishing the glory of God, the heavens above will never cease to declare and proclaim his majesty and glory. They are for ever preaching; for, like an unbroken chain, their message is delivered from day to day and from night to night." (Tholuck, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "Day bids us labour, night reminds us to prepare for our last home; day bids us work for God, and night invites us to rest in him; day bids us look for endless day, and night warns us to escape from everlasting night." (Spurgeon)

d. **There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard:** The glory of God in the visible heavens is for all to see; it is communicated to all mankind, no matter what their **language**. It is a message that has **gone out through all the earth**.

i. The Apostle Paul expanded this idea in Romans 1. He explained that God's *invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Rom 1:20)*. Paul told us that because this testimony had gone out through all creation, all men are *without excuse* for rejecting the God who gave us such clear (and beautiful) evidence of His power and wisdom.

ii. "Should a man live underground, and there converse with the works of art and mechanism, and should afterwards be brought up into the open day, and see the several glories of the heaven and earth, he would immediately pronounce them the works of such a Being as we define God to be." (Aristotle, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries." (Astronomer and physicist Robert Jastrow, cited in Boice)

2. (4b-6) *The message from the heavens is strong and glorious.*

**In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoices like a strong man to run its race.
Its rising is from one end of heaven,
And its circuit to the other end;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.**

a. **In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun:** David poetically described the nighttime sky as a dwelling place – a tent, a **tabernacle** – for **the sun**. The sun comes out of its “tent” every day to cross the heavens, and returns to its **tabernacle** at night.

i. “God has assigned it its place to occupy and its *course* to run; the whole sky its mere *tent* and track.” (Kidner)

b. **Like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race:** The sun makes its course through the sky with strength and joy, like a man in his prime or an athlete running a race.

i. “All would agree that the psalm, if it glances at mythology, repudiates it. The sun may be ‘like’ a bridegroom or a runner; it is in fact no more than a glorious part of God’s ‘handiwork.’” (Kidner)

c. **Its rising is from one end of heaven...there is nothing hidden from its heat:** The sun covers the whole sky, and its strength extends everywhere. It is a wonderful example of the glory of God declared in the heavens.

B. The message from the word of God.

1. (7-9) *The glorious character of God’s word, described seven ways.*

**The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true *and* righteous altogether.**

a. **The law of the LORD:** Here David abruptly shifted from praising the God who reveals Himself in creation to praising the same God for revealing Himself in His word. It is as if David said, "Creation tells us much about God, but His word tells us much more."

i. "'Two things', according to Kant, 'fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe...the starry heavens above and the moral law within.' The psalm transcends the second of these themes by looking to the divine law revealed." (Kidner)

ii. One reason the word is a greater revelation than creation is that it tells us much more about God. It reveals Him as the covenant God of love, as reflected in the structure of this psalm. In Psa 19:1-6, God is referred to as *El* – the most generic word for God in the Hebrew language (even more generic than the commonly used *Elohim*). Yet here at Psa 19:7-9, God is referred to as *Yahweh* (**the LORD**), the God of covenant love and faithfulness to His people.

iii. "He is wisest who reads both the world-book and the Word-book as two volumes of the same work, and feels concerning them, 'My Father wrote them both.'" (Spurgeon)

iv. David then explains seven glorious statements about the word of God: how wonderful and effective it is. As is common in other places – especially the great Psalms 119 – David used a variety of expressions to refer to the word of God (**law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, judgments**). It is best to see these as poetic terms describing God's written revelation in general, rather than one specific type of revelation (such as only the laws given in the Mosaic law).

b. **The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:** The word of God is **perfect**. It gives us *all things that pertain to life and godliness (2Pe 1:3)*. While it does not give us all knowledge, all the knowledge it gives is true and **perfect**. Understood in its literary context, God's word is never wrong in science or history or the understanding of either divine or human nature.

i. Part of the perfection of God's word is that it is effective; it does the work of **converting the soul**. There is power in the reading and hearing and studying of the word of God that goes beyond intellectual benefit; it actually changes for the better – *converts* – **the soul**.

ii. The Hebrew word translated here as **converting** is perhaps better understood as *reviving* – that is, bringing new life to the soul. "First, God's word 'revives.' Its restorative quality gives healing to the whole person by assuring forgiveness and cleansing and by giving life to the godly." (VanGemeren)

c. **The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple:** The word of God is **sure**, being reliable and certain. As the psalmist would write in Psa 119:89, *Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*

i. “*Sure*, by its passive form, can mean not only what is firm but what is confirmed: *cf.* ‘verified’ in Gen 42:20.” (Kidner)

ii. Because it is so sure and certain, it does the work of **making wise the simple**. Many people of simple education or upbringing have tremendous wisdom unto life and godliness because they study and trust the **sure** word of the LORD.

d. **The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart:** God’s word and the commands contained within are **right**. They are morally **right**, they are practically **right**, and they are universally **right**. They are **right** because it is the revelation of a God who is holy, true, and always **right**.

i. **Are right:** “To make *straight, smooth, right, upright*, opposed to *crookedness* in mind or conduct; showing what the man should be, both *within* and *without*.” (Clarke)

ii. The one who knows the word of God and the God of the word *rejoices* in this. He finds joy, actual pleasure in the truth of God and relationship with God revealed in His word.

e. **The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes:** Because God’s word comes from a God who is Himself **pure** and holy, the word itself is **pure**. A pure God can communicate no other way. We never have to worry about the word of God leading people into sin or impurity; if it seems to have happened, it is evidence that the Scriptures have been twisted (2Pe 3:16).

i. This pure word will *enlighten* **the eyes**. It will bring the cheer and comfort and knowledge and confidence that a light in the midst of darkness brings.

f. **The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever:** The word of God is **clean**, and therefore is **enduring forever**. It will never fade or corrode, diminishing because of impurity. It is **clean** and it makes clean.

i. Here David called the word of God the “**fear of the LORD.**” It is deeply connected to the awe and majesty of God Himself. One who reads and hears and studies the word of God, meeting Him in His word, will have an appropriate appreciation of God’s awe and majesty – **the fear of the LORD.**

g. **The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether:** David summarized this beautiful chain of seven pearls, each describing some aspect of the word of God. Here he declared that the words of God **are true and righteous altogether**; there is nothing false or unrighteous in His word.

i. There is no applied aspect to this statement as in the previous five. For David, it was enough to simply say it: “**true and righteous altogether.**” Perhaps David assumed we would be wise and logical enough to apply it ourselves: “Therefore read it, study it, meditate on it, love it, live it.”

ii. Remember that King David wrote this with only a fraction of what we have today as the word of God; his portion was not as glorious as the complete revelation of God. David would have had the first five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy); Joshua, Judges, a few psalms; and perhaps Job and Ruth. We can only imagine what King David would have written about Isaiah or Hosea or the entire Psalter, much less any of the books of the New Testament. We can say with confidence that God’s word *is far more glorious than King David knew!*

2. (10-11) *The great value of God’s word.*

**More to be desired *are they* than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them *there is* great reward.**

a. **More to be desired are they than gold:** King David insisted that the value of God's word – His written revelation to man – was more valuable and desirable than **gold** itself. David wanted no amount of money or wealth to command his attention and affection more than the word of God.

i. King David was a massively wealthy man, yet he is rarely known for his riches. He is much more known for his great heart toward God. His son Solomon was even more wealthy than David, and was known for his riches – yet not nearly as much for his heart toward God and his love of God's word.

ii. If it weren't enough to say that God's word should be more desirable than **gold**, King David amplified the point by saying, "**Yea, than much fine gold.**"

iii. "This is strictly true; but who believes it? By most men *gold* is preferred both to *God* and his *judgments*; and they will barter every heavenly portion for gold and silver!" (Clarke)

b. **Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb:** For King David, God's word was not only to be held in greater esteem than material wealth, but also greater than experiences of the senses. **Honey** is sweet and pleasant to eat, but God's word is **sweeter** still.

c. **Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward:** David here gave two reasons why the word of God was greater than material wealth or sensual pleasures.

i. God's word gives instruction – *warning* – that wealth or pleasures do not give (**is warned**).

- Warning is needed for sins we are susceptible to.
- Warning is needed for dangers we cannot see.
- Warning is needed for dangers we cannot appreciate.
- Warning is needed for dangers far off in the future.
- Warnings are often *rejected*.

ii. God's word gives benefit – **reward** – greater than wealth or pleasures (**great reward**).

d. **In keeping them there is great reward**: It is also true that there is **great reward** *for* keeping the word of God; but that is not what the psalmist said here. Here David noted the reward **in keeping them**. There is a sense in which obedience becomes its own reward, because we live the way God wants us and designed us to live.

i. One of the great rewards of keeping the word of God is peace of mind. "A quiet conscience is a little heaven. A martyr was fastened to the stake, and the sheriff who was to execute him expressed his sorrow that he should persevere in his opinions, and compel him to set fire to the pile. The martyr answered, 'Do not trouble yourself, for I am not troubling myself. Come and lay your hand upon my heart, and see if it does not beat quietly.' His request was complied with, and he was found to be quite calm. 'Now,' said he, 'lay your hand on your own heart, and see if you are not more troubled than I am; and then go your way, and, instead of pitying me, pity yourself.'" (Spurgeon)

3. (12-13) *The desire for inward cleansing.*

Who can understand *his* errors?

Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;

Let them not have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,

And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

a. **Who can understand his errors?** In the previous verse David reflected on the warnings found in the word of God, and in the great reward found in obeying God's word. This made him reflect on the times and ways he had ignored the warnings and not kept the word.

i. In asking "**Who can understand his errors?**" David understood that he had ignored and disobeyed God's word even more than he was aware of. What he knew was enough to make him concerned; his actual **errors** before God were still worse.

ii. Notably, the fact that we cannot **understand** our **errors** does not excuse us from them. We are still accountable for such **errors** and **faults** before God and must trust in His atonement to cleanse us from these **errors** and **secret faults**.

b. **Cleanse me from secret faults:** David wisely prayed this prayer, knowing that he could not know just how many his **errors** were before God. He needed cleansing even from the sins and **faults** that were secret to him.

i. "We desire the inner purity of heart. But this is peculiarly God's prerogative. It is his work to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. 'Cleanse THOU me.'" (Meyer)

ii. **Secret faults:** "From those which I have committed, and have forgotten; from those for which I have not repented; from those which have been committed in my heart, but have not been brought to

act in my life; from those which I have committed without knowing that they were sins, sins of *ignorance*; and from those which I have committed in private, for which I should blush and be confounded were they to be made public.” (Clarke)

c. **Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins:** David added this because he knew that his problem was greater than **secret faults** and unknown **errors**. Without God’s help (which he here prayed for), he was also perfectly capable of committing **presumptuous sins**, sins done in a proud and knowing way.

i. Things that make sin **presumptuous**:

- When we know better.
- When friends have warned us.
- When God Himself has warned us.
- When we have warned others against the same sins.
- When we plan and relish our sin.

ii. The description of **errors** and **secret faults** and **presumptuous sins** reminds us that sin has a progression.

- It goes from passing temptation to chosen thought (**errors**).
- It goes from chosen thought to object of meditation.
- It goes from object of meditation to wished-for fulfillment.
- It goes from wished-for fulfillment to planned action (**secret faults**).
- It goes from planned action to opportunity sought.
- It goes from opportunity sought to performed act.

- It goes from performed act to repeated action.
- It goes from repeated action to delight (**presumptuous sins**).
- It goes from delight to new and various ways.
- It goes from new and various ways to habit.
- It goes from habit to idolatry, demanding to be served.
- It goes from idolatry to sacrifice.
- It goes from sacrifice to slavery.

iii. All along this continuum the Holy Spirit – and hopefully our conscience – say, “No – stop!” All along this continuum, we are given *the way of escape* by God (1Co 10:13), if we will only take it. Yet if we do not, and we end up in slavery to sin, it legitimately questions the state of our soul (1Jn 3:6-9).

iv. Because of this great danger, David prayed **keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins**. “Will you just note, that this prayer was the *prayer of a saint*, the prayer of a holy man of God? Did David need to pray thus? Did the ‘man after God’s own heart’ need to cry, ‘Keep back thy servant?’ Yes, he did.” (Spurgeon)

d. **Let them not have dominion over me:** Indeed, King David not only knew that he was capable of such sins, but that they could potentially have **dominion over** him. His prayer was rightly placed; his love of God’s word and his dependence upon God in prayer would help him stay free from the dominion of enslaving sin.

i. This prayer is even more fitting for one who relates to God on the basis of the New Covenant. As Paul wrote, *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace* (Rom 6:14).

e.

Then I shall be blameless: David knew that when sin was addressed in his life – dealing both with inward, secret sin *and* outward, presumptuous, enslaving sin – then he could be **blameless** and **innocent of great transgression**.

i. This was not a claim of sinless perfection, either achieved or to attain to before resurrection. David knew well that he needed to be *cleansed*, and trusted in God's perfect sacrifice – prefigured by the animal sacrifices he practiced in the Mosaic system. David understood blamelessness and innocence on a human, relative level and not in an absolute sense according to the Divine measure.

4. (14) *A prayer of surrender and purity.*

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

a. **Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight:** David closed this glorious psalm with a humble surrender of his mouth and heart to God. He knew that real godliness was not only a matter of what a man did, but also of what he said and thought in his heart.

i. This was not a proud proclamation that David *knew* he was innocent and blameless; it was a plea to be made so by the transforming power of God.

ii. **Acceptable in Your sight:** "The psalm ends, not on the note of avoiding sin, but on that of offering back to God the mind's fitting response to His own words, as a pure sacrifice (*cf.* Hos 14:2). This is the

probable implication of *acceptable*, a term often found in sacrificial contexts.” (Kidner)

b. **O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer:** King David looked to the Lord GOD to be his strength and redemption. He knew that he needed a **Redeemer**, and that the faithful God would rescue him.

i. **Strength** can also be translated as *Rock*. God’s strength is like a mighty rock that rescues us and gives us a firm standing place.

ii. **Redeemer** is that great Hebrew word *goel*, the kinsman-redeemer. It was the *goel* who bought his relative out of slavery, who rescued him in bankruptcy and total loss. King David looked to God Himself as his kinsman-redeemer.

iii. “If our Rock were not our Redeemer, we should be without hope. If our Redeemer were not our Rock, still might we be afraid. It is good that we never forget the mutual interpretation of these two revelations of God.” (Morgan)

iv. This psalm has run a glorious course. It begins with recognizing the glory of God in creation, and then the glory of His written revelation. Next to this great God and His great works, David knew himself to be small and sinful. Yet this great God would also be David’s **strength** and **Redeemer** as David put his trust in Him.

v. The glorious God of creation and revelation was also the glorious God of personal relationship and redemption for His people. King David knew this; so should we.

Trust in the Name of the Lord Our God

Psa 20:1 May the LORD answer you when you are in trouble! May the God of Jacob protect you!

Psa 20:2 May he send you help from his Temple and give you aid from Mount Zion.

Psa 20:3 May he accept all your offerings and be pleased with all your sacrifices.

Psa 20:4 May he give you what you desire and make all your plans succeed.

Psa 20:5 Then we will shout for joy over your victory and celebrate your triumph by praising our God. May the LORD answer all your requests.

Psa 20:6 Now I know that the LORD gives victory to his chosen king; he answers him from his holy heaven and by his power gives him great victories.

Psa 20:7 Some trust in their war chariots and others in their horses, but we trust in the power of the LORD our God.

Psa 20:8 Such people will stumble and fall, but we will rise and stand firm.

Psa 20:9 Give victory to the king, O LORD; answer us when we call.

Psalms 20:1-9

Psalms 20 – The LORD Saves His Anointed

*The title of this psalm is the same as several others: **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** Yet the psalm itself is different, notably because it is in the voice of a multitude that prays on behalf of the King of Israel as he is ready to go into battle. This is seen in the way the psalm speaks in the first-person plural (We) in Psa 20:1-5; Psa 20:7-9. The first-person singular (I) of 20:6 is likely the response of either David himself or the High Priest on his behalf.*

*Yet since this is **A Psalm of David**, perhaps David took a moment of spontaneous prayer by the people on his behalf*

and shaped it into a song to remember and recall the spiritual strength and glory of that moment.

A. The people pray for the King.

1. (1-2) May the LORD answer and help.

**May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble;
May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;
May He send you help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen you out of Zion;**

a. **May the LORD answer you:** This was a prayer from a multitude or congregation (based on the use of we in 20:5) that God would answer the prayers of one, who in context is the king readying for battle.

i. We know that “**you**” refers to one person, because it is in the singular. “*You* is singular throughout, identified in verse 6 as the Lord’s anointed.” (Kidner)

ii. The picture is that of King David, before battle – perhaps something like the battle with the Syrians in 2 Samuel 10 – at the tabernacle of God and offering prayers and sacrifices. Here the onlooking multitude responds to the king’s prayer with the cry, “**May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble.**”

iii. “It is one of the most stirring of the Psalms, by its tense awareness of life-and-death issues soon to be resolved.” (Kidner)

iv. With the eye of faith, we see that this also speaks to the great battle fought by one greater than King David – by Jesus, the Son of David and the King of Kings. We can imagine this prayer being offered prophetically for Jesus as He pointed Himself toward the cross, where He would fight the greatest battle against sin, death, and Satan’s power.

b. **Answer you in the day of trouble...defend you...send you help...strengthen you:** After the pattern of Hebrew poetry, this idea is intensively expressed by the use of repetition with slight variation. David was about to lead Israel into battle, and he needed the help of God in each of these ways.

i. Because King David was about to lead Israel as a whole into battle, the language is full of references appealing to the LORD as the God of Israel.

- **The LORD:** Using *Yahweh*, the covenant name of God.

- **The God of Jacob:** Remembering Israel's patriarch.

- **From the sanctuary:** Calling to mind the tabernacle, the center of Israel's worship.

- **Out of Zion:** Referring to the hills of Jerusalem.

ii. "This word for *sanctuary* is simply 'holiness', a synonym here for *Zion*, where already God's ark, but not yet His Temple, signified His presence." (Kidner)

iii. The prayer that God would **strengthen you out of Zion** is fitting for more than the field of battle. It is also appropriate for the church pulpit, which is a field of battle in a spiritual sense. "This verse is a benediction befitting a Sabbath morning, and may be the salutation either of a pastor to his people, or of a church to its minister." (Spurgeon)

2. (3) *May the LORD receive sacrifice.*

**May He remember all your offerings,
And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah**

a. **May He remember all your offerings:** Sacrifice was commonly made at important moments, such as on the eve of battle. This is a prayer that the LORD would see

and receive the sacrifices King David would make before war.

i. **All your offerings:** “The *minchah*, which is here mentioned, was a *gratitude-offering*. It is rarely used to signify a bloody sacrifice.” (Clarke)

b. **May He remember...and accept your burnt sacrifice:** This reminds us that *not all* sacrifices are accepted before God. If they were not offered with faith and in accordance with the Levitical system, they would not be remembered or accepted by God.

i. **Burnt sacrifice:** “The *olah* here mentioned was a *bloody sacrifice*. The blood of the victim was spilt at the altar, and the flesh consumed.” (Clarke)

ii. The place of *faith* was important in the Old Testament sacrificial system. The one who brought the offering had to trust in the ultimate, perfect sacrifice that God would one day provide, the one that each animal sacrifice pointed toward (Gen 22:8; Gen 22:14).

iii. “The prayer for acceptance of the burnt offering is very graphic, since the word rendered ‘accept’ is literally ‘esteem fat.’” (Maclaren)

c. **Selah:** The idea in the Hebrew for this word (occurring 74 times in the Old Testament) is for a *pause*. Most scholars think it speaks of a reflective pause, a pause to meditate on the words just spoken. It may also be a musical instruction, or a musical interlude of some kind.

i. We take this **Selah** as an opportunity to consider Jesus, and see that this prayer was appropriate for Him as He faced the cross. The prayer was worthy to be prayed – that God would indeed **remember** and **accept** the offering Jesus made on the cross, which could rightly be called a **burnt sacrifice**, as it was

burned with the fire of God's righteous judgment, and Jesus held nothing back in this **sacrifice**.

3. (4) *May the LORD grant fulfillment.*

**May He grant you according to your heart's desire,
And fulfill all your purpose.**

a. **May He grant you according to your heart's desire:** In this moment, King David had one desire – to defend the people of God and the kingdom in covenant with God. Therefore it was good to pray, "**May He grant you according to your heart's desire.**"

i. When our desires are in accord with the plan and will of God for us, we can pray this same prayer with confidence. We can also look for God to bring our desires more and more into conformity with His, in the course of our Christian growth.

b. **And fulfill all your purpose:** Since David's **purpose** was victory for the people of God, this was a good and necessary prayer to pray.

i. We see this statement also applied to the great desire and purpose for the King of Kings as He went to battle to accomplish our salvation. We look to Jesus, struggling in the Garden of Gethsemane and say to Him, "**May He grant You according to Your heart's desire, and fulfill all Your purpose.**"

ii. On a personal level, we also see that God gives each one a **purpose** to fulfill in His great plan of the ages. The key to a life of fulfilled **desire** and achieved **purpose** is to find our place in His great plan, instead of hoping to make God an actor in our plan.

- Jesus knew this fulfilled desire and purpose, shown by His prayer in John 17 : *I have finished the work which You have given Me to do (Joh 17:4).*

- The Apostle Paul knew this fulfilled desire and purpose, shown by these words toward the end of his earthly life: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith* (2Ti 4:7).

4. (5) *May the LORD answer prayer.*

**We will rejoice in your salvation,
And in the name of our God we will set up our
banners!**

May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

a. **We will rejoice in your salvation:** This was the confidence the people had in King David's success. They had so much trust in God's deliverance that they had already planned to **set up our banners** of joyful celebration.

i. "Here the raising of the banners signifies God's victory over the enemies." (VanGemeren)

ii. The **banners** are "Our flags of defiance to the enemy, or our tokens of triumph to God's glory, who hath given us the victory." (Trapp)

b. **May the LORD fulfill all your petitions:** Once again the prayer demonstrates the confidence that God would hear and **fulfill** the prayers of His king.

i. This was true both of David and the Son of David (Joh 17:1-5); of the King of Israel and the King of Kings. Jesus prayed for success in His work on the cross, and it was unthinkable that the Father would not answer the prayers of the Son.

B. The triumph of the LORD's Anointed.

1. (6) *The LORD saves His anointed.*

**Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;
He will answer him from His holy heaven
With the saving strength of His right hand.**

a. **Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed:**
Here King David expressed the great confidence that God would answer the prayers of His people. God would save (rescue) the king (**His anointed**).

i. **His anointed:** In a sense, all of the kings of Israel were God's **anointed** because they were all appointed to their office by a literal anointing of oil poured upon their head. This literal anointing with oil was a picture of the spiritual anointing with the Holy Spirit needed for their duty of leading the people of God as king. In saying "**His anointed**," David refers to himself as king.

ii. **His anointed:** At the same time, it was also understood that there would come an ultimate Anointed One, the perfect King of Israel – the Meshiach, the Christ, the Messiah (as in Psalms 2 and others). It was true of David and Israel in his day that the Lord **saves His anointed** and his people; it is even more perfectly true of the ultimate and perfect Anointed One, Jesus Christ.

iii. "The verb 'saves', from the same root as 'victorious,' could yield the translation 'the LORD gives victory to his anointed.'" (VanGemeren) Kidner also notes that **saves** (in Psa 20:6; Psa 20:9) comes from the same root in Hebrew as the name of Jesus.

iv. Indeed, **the LORD saves His anointed:**

- The Father saved the Son from sin.
- The Father saved the Son from pride.
- The Father saved the Son from self-reliance.
- The Father saved the Son from doubt.
- The Father saved the Son from failure.

- The Father saved the Son from death, by raising Him from the dead.

b. **He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand:** This confirms and strengthens the idea that the **LORD saves His anointed.**

- i. He is saved by an **answer**; God is not silent to His anointed.
- ii. He is saved from **heaven**; God hears and sends help from His throne.
- iii. He is saved with power, **with the saving strength.**
- iv. He is saved with skill and favor, with the **strength** that comes from **His right hand.**
- v. Each of these was true for King David, but even more perfectly true of the Son of David, the ultimate **anointed** of the LORD.

2. (7) *Trusting in the name of the LORD.*

**Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.**

a. **Some trust in chariots, and some in horses:** David knew what kings and their people usually trusted in – human strength and the ways it is often expressed (**in chariots** and **in horses**).

- i. If writing today, David might say something like, "Some trust in nuclear weapons and some trust in tanks." It is part of human nature to put our **trust** in such things.
- ii. "Chariots and horses are very terrible, especially to raw soldiers unaccustomed to their whirling onset; but the Name is mightier." (Maclaren)

iii. Part of the reason David refused to **trust in chariots** and **horses** was because God had commanded it so, commanding in the Law of Moses that the Kings of Israel would *not* multiply horses for themselves, either for use in cavalry or to pull war-chariots (Deu 17:16).

b. **But we will remember:** David drew a strong contrast. "They trust in those things, **but** our trust is in God."

i. "In the spiritual war, in which we are all engaged, the first and necessary step to victory is, to renounce all confidence in the wisdom and strength of nature and the world; and to remember, that we can do nothing, but in the name, by the merits, through the power, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and our God." (Horne)

ii. "Alas, how many in our day who profess to be the Lord's are as abjectly dependent upon their fellow-men or upon an arm of flesh in some shape or other, as if they had never known the name of Jehovah at all." (Spurgeon)

c. **But we will remember the name of the LORD our God:** David put his trust in the person, the character of God. He didn't carry the **name of the LORD** as a magical incantation; rather **the name** speaks of the comprehensive character of God and is an expression of His faithfulness to His covenant with Israel.

i. "By *the name of God* is generally understood, in Holy Writ, the various properties and attributes of God: these properties and attributes make up and constitute the *name* of God. As when Solomon says, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.'" (Melvill, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. *This* – the character and faithfulness of God – was stronger to David and Israel than thousands of **chariots** or **horses**.

iii. Therefore, we sense a triumphant defiance in David when he says, “**But we will remember.**” He acknowledges how easy it is to forget, and how counter-intuitive to human nature it is to trust God instead of human strength and resources.

3. (8-9) *The triumph of those who trust in the LORD.*

**They have bowed down and fallen;
But we have risen and stand upright.
Save, LORD!
May the King answer us when we call.**

a. **They have bowed down and fallen; but we have risen and stand upright:** David’s trust in God could be justified on many grounds, but one of those was the simple truth that David found that *trusting God works*, he learned that this faith leads to success. Those who trusted in chariots and horses **have bowed down and fallen**. Those who remembered the name of the LORD **have risen and stand upright**.

b. **Save, LORD! May the King answer us when we call:** The rescue David confidently sang of had not completely come. He still needed to cry out, “**Save, LORD!**” He still had his trust in the anticipated **answer** of the LORD.

i. “This is the language of faith, not after the battle, but before it.” (Morgan)

ii. “The final phrase, literally ‘in the day of our calling’, has a telling echo of the opening verse.” (Kidner)

The King Rejoices in the Lord's Strength

Psa 21:1 The king is glad, O LORD, because you gave him strength; he rejoices because you made him victorious.

Psa 21:2 You have given him his heart's desire; you have answered his request.

Psa 21:3 You came to him with great blessings and set a crown of gold on his head.

Psa 21:4 He asked for life, and you gave it, a long and lasting life.

Psa 21:5 His glory is great because of your help; you have given him fame and majesty.

Psa 21:6 Your blessings are with him forever, and your presence fills him with joy.

Psa 21:7 The king trusts in the LORD Almighty; and because of the LORD's constant love he will always be secure.

Psa 21:8 The king will capture all his enemies; he will capture everyone who hates him.

Psa 21:9 He will destroy them like a blazing fire when he appears. The LORD will devour them in his anger, and fire will consume them.

Psa 21:10 None of their descendants will survive; the king will kill them all.

Psa 21:11 They make their plans, and plot against him, but they will not succeed.

Psa 21:12 He will shoot his arrows at them and make them turn and run.

Psa 21:13 We praise you, LORD, for your great strength! We will sing and praise your power.

Psalms 21:1-13

Psalms 21 – The Joyful King

*The title of this psalm is the same as several others: **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** It logically connects*

with the previous one, Psalms 20. It would seem that the victory prayed for and trusted in has been realized, and now David thanks God for the victory given.

"There the people prayed for the king; here they give thanks for him: there they asked that his desires might be fulfilled; here they bless Jehovah, who has fulfilled them; there the battle was impending; here it has been won, though foes are still in the field." (Alexander Maclaren)

A. A grateful, joyful king.

1. (1-2) The king's joy in God's strength.

**The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD;
And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
You have given him his heart's desire,
And have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah**

a. **The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD:** King David had many reasons to take **joy** in the **strength** of God. Perhaps this **joy** came from preservation and success in battle or some other deliverance.

i. The *tone* of the opening of this psalm is passionate. "The shoutings of the early Methodists in the excitement of the joy were far more pardonable than our own lukewarmness. Our joy should have some sort of inexpressibleness in it." (Spurgeon)

ii. **The king:** "The ancient Jewish Targum (the Chaldean paraphrase of the Old Testament) and Talmud render the word *king* in verse 1 by *melek mashiach* (King Messiah), which means that the Jews in an early period understood these words to be spoken of the Messiah. A change came in the Middle Ages as a result of a judgment by Rabbi Solomon Isaaci, known as Rashi (b. A.D. 1040). He endorsed the early view but suggested it be dropped, saying,

'Our old doctors interpreted this psalm of King Messiah, but in order to meet the Schismatics [that is, the Christians] it is better to understand it of David himself.'" (Boice)

b. **You have given him his heart's desire:** The **strength** and **salvation** of God came to David in response to both the **desire** of his heart and his spoken prayers (**the request of his lips**).

i. This speaks to the special place *answered prayer* has in the life of the believer. Every Christian should know the thrill of frequent, wonderful answers to prayer. When a Christian does not enjoy the blessing of answered prayer, it is because he is prayerless, he is praying wrongly, or he has some hindrance in prayer.

ii. There are many things that can hinder prayer in the life of the believer, things which would prevent him from saying with David, "**You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips.**" Unanswered prayer should be regarded as a warning signal that there may be a problem in one or more of the following reasons for unanswered prayer:

- Not abiding in Jesus (Joh 15:7).
- Unbelief (Mat 17:20-21).
- Failure to fast (Mat 17:21).
- Husband not honoring his wife (1Pe 3:7).
- Not asking (Jas 4:2).
- Selfish praying (Jas 4:3).
- Disobedience (1Jn 3:22).
- Not praying in God's will (1Jn 5:14-15).

- Unconfessed sin (Jas 5:16).
- Cold, passionless prayer (Jas 5:16-18; 2Ki 20:5).
- Prayerlessness or a lack of persistence in prayer (Luk 18:1-7; Psa 55:17).
- Sin against others (Mat 5:23-24).
- Lack of unity (Mat 18:19).
- Not praying in the name of Jesus (Joh 14:13-14).
- Pride (Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5, Pro 3:34).
- Lying and deceitfulness (Psa 17:1).
- Lack of Bible reading and Bible teaching (Pro 28:9).
- Trusting in the length or the form of prayer (Mat 6:7).

iii. The avoidance of these things does not *earn* or *merit* God's response; He is not in debt to us if we avoid them. Yet they are clearly hindrances to answered prayer.

c. **Selah**: The idea in the Hebrew for this word (occurring 74 times in the Old Testament) is for a *pause*. Most scholars think it speaks of a reflective pause, a pause to meditate on the words just spoken. It may also be a musical instruction, or a musical interlude of some kind.

i. We take this **Selah** as an opportunity to thank God for the **strength** and **salvation** He has shown in our lives, and for the glorious way He answers prayer. We, like King David of old, take **joy** in such a great and loving God.

2. (3-7) *Reasons for the king's joy.*

**For You meet him with the blessings of goodness;
You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.
He asked life from You, and You gave *it* to him—**

**Length of days forever and ever.
His glory *is* great in Your salvation;
Honor and majesty You have placed upon him.
For You have made him most blessed forever;
You have made him exceedingly glad with Your
presence.
For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not
be moved.**

a. You meet him with the blessings of goodness:
King David could see that the **goodness** of God had come to **meet** him. God brought it to him, more than David chasing down these **blessings of goodness**.

i. It was certainly true that God went before David with blessings, and that David recognized and praised Him for it. Yet often it did not *seem* like that in the many long years between his anointing for the throne as a young man and when he finally took the throne of Israel.

ii. God's goodness and grace come to meet us all the time.

- The grace of His love loves us before we ever loved Him.
- The grace of restraint keeps us back from committing sins that would put us even more out of reach of the Gospel.
- The grace of salvation comes out to meet us, bringing us the goodness of God and making us able to receive the Gospel.
- The grace of ministry prepares us a thousand ways for what God has for us in the future.
- The grace of service prepares the ground where we will work before we ever get there.

b. You set a crown of pure gold upon his head:

David wore the crown both of the throne of Israel – God’s special nation – and the crown of victory. Its nature of **pure gold** shows how special the nation and the victory were.

- i. It was undeniably true of King David that he let *God* put the **crown** on his head. Though in some sense he had the right and the reasons to forcibly take the crown from Saul, he waited for God to place it **upon his head**.

c. He asked life from You, and You gave it to him:

David went into battle praying that God would preserve his life, and now he celebrated the answer to that prayer. In the life-and-death danger of battle, David was given life and **length of days**.

- i. “While the gift of *life...for ever and ever* might have implied to an Old Testament reader either a hyperbole...or an allusion to the endless dynasty promised to David in 2Sa 7:16, the New Testament has filled in the picture firmly with the figure of the ultimate king, the Messiah, for whom the whole stanza is true without exaggeration.” (Kidner)

d. His glory is great in Your salvation: David knew the exaltation that came to kings and victors in battle; but here he declared that this **glory**, this **honor**, this **majesty** he enjoyed came from God and not from himself.

e. You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence: David proclaimed that he was **most blessed forever**, but it was the **presence** of God Himself that was his greatest blessing and gladness. David was more thrilled with the **presence** of God than with the crown of royalty or victory.

f. The king trusts in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved:

David declared his trust in the **mercy** of God, and that it would continue to preserve and bless him in the future.

i. Each of these things was certainly true of King David, but they are also – or perhaps even more so – true of David's greater Son, the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Son of David. We can apply each line in Psa 21:3-7 to Jesus, victorious after His great work on the cross.

- Victorious Jesus was met with the **blessings of goodness** when He ascended to heaven.
- Jesus wears the **crown** , both as King of Kings and glorious conqueror – and His crown is of **pure gold** .
- Jesus **asked life from** God the Father, and as God's Holy One was delivered from the grave.
- Jesus gloried in the **salvation** extended to Him from the Father – not a salvation from sin, but a victory over sin and death.
- Jesus rejoiced in the **presence** of His Father, even though there was a sense in which it was turned away from Him on the cross.
- Jesus continues to trust in His Father and will **not be moved** .

ii. "Napoleon crowned himself, but Jehovah crowned the Lord Jesus; the empire of the one melted in an hour, but the other has an abiding dominion." (Spurgeon)

iii. We think particularly of what Psa 21:6 tells us of Jesus: **For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.** This verse tells us that even

though Jesus was a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief (Isa 53:3), yet at the same time He was a man who knew what it was to be **most blessed forever** and **exceedingly glad**.

iv. "He was the Prince of Peace, even when he was despised and rejected of men. Deep as were his griefs, we may reckon Jesus of Nazareth among the happiest of men." (Spurgeon)

v. We can think of many reasons why Jesus is so happy:

- He never sinned, and sin is the mother of sorrow.
- He never was pained by His conscience.
- He never endured in Himself hatred, envy, bitterness or unforgiveness.
- He had perfect peace in the wisdom and power of God the Father.
- He was a giving, generous man who knew the joy of giving.
- He completely finished His work and knew the satisfaction of that.
- He is the source of all blessing and knows the joy of blessing others.
- He rejoices over every sinner that comes to repentance.
- He rejoices in seeing His people at work for Him.
- He rejoices in the sufferings they endure for Him.

B. The judgments of God defend His people.

1. (8-10) What God will do to His enemies.

**Your hand will find all Your enemies;
Your right hand will find those who hate You.**

**You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger;
The LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath,
And the fire shall devour them.
Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from among the sons of men.**

a. **Your hand will find all Your enemies:** David recognized that even though he was victorious in battle, God was not done finding and judging His **enemies**.

i. **The time of Your anger:** "The expression, 'the time of thine anger,' reminds us that as now is the time of his grace, so there will be a set time for his wrath.... There is a day of vengeance of our God; let those who despise the day of grace remember this day of wrath." (Spurgeon)

b. **The LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath:** David confidently expressed his confidence that God would judge His enemies, and he expressed that confidence in the strongest terms – even that God would also judge the posterity of those who fight against Him.

i. "We pity the lost for they are men, but we cannot pity them as enemies of Christ." (Spurgeon)

ii. **The fire shall devour them:** "Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him, and fought against him, even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them to eternity a fiery oven to themselves." (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (11-12) Why the enemies of God deserve judgment.

**For they intended evil against You;
They devised a plot *which* they are not able to perform.
Therefore You will make them turn their back;**

You will make ready *Your arrows* on *Your string* toward their faces.

a. **For they intended evil against You:** The strong statements of judgment in Psa 21:8-10 seem to demand an explanation. Why such a severe judgment? Because they intentionally rebelled against God and His people, even though their plans were bigger than their ability to perform (**they devised a plot which they are not able to perform**).

i. "Intentional evil has a virus in it which is not found in sins of ignorance; now as ungodly men with malice aforethought attack the gospel of Christ, their crime is great, and their punishment will be proportionate." (Spurgeon)

ii. We find comfort in the truth that **they devised a plot which they are not able to perform**. Many threaten and confidently announce the demise of God's work in our day, but they most definitely are **not able to perform** it.

b. **You will make them turn their back:** David sees – and perhaps literally saw – the enemies of God running away on the field of battle, with their **back** turned against the advancing armies of God.

c. **You will make ready *Your arrows* on *Your string* toward their faces:** David saw the enemies of God as helpless before the **ready** arrows and taut bow **string** of the war-like, judging God. His **arrows** are aimed right at **their faces**.

i. "The judgments of God are called his 'arrows,' being sharp, swift, sure, and deadly." (Horne)

ii. This reminds us how *near* the judgment of God actually is against those who reject Him, and how it is only His *great mercy* that prevents the release of His

arrow of judgment against them. It is a great (but rarely regarded or understood) sin that man ignores and presumes upon this great mercy.

3. (13) Praising the God of strength.

**Be exalted, O LORD, in Your own strength!
We will sing and praise Your power.**

a. **Be exalted, O LORD, in Your own strength:** David worshipped God directly here. He exalted the LORD who had this great strength within Himself, and never needed to rely on another for strength.

i. "*Exalt thyself, O Lord* – thy creatures cannot exalt thee." (Clarke)

b. **We will sing and praise Your power:** After the direct statement of praise, David expressed the determination that he and the people of God would *continue* to praise God, and to do so in song.

i. The psalm's end is consistent with the tone throughout. It is full of praise to God for the blessings of victory, deliverance, and answered prayer. This attitude should always be among the people of God.

Why Have You Forsaken Me?

Psa 22:1 My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? I have cried desperately for help, but still it does not come.

Psa 22:2 During the day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer; I call at night, but get no rest.

Psa 22:3 But you are enthroned as the Holy One, the one whom Israel praises.

Psa 22:4 Our ancestors put their trust in you; they trusted you, and you saved them.

Psa 22:5 They called to you and escaped from danger; they trusted you and were not disappointed.

Psa 22:6 But I am no longer a human being; I am a worm, despised and scorned by everyone!

Psa 22:7 All who see me make fun of me; they stick out their tongues and shake their heads.

Psa 22:8 "You relied on the LORD," they say. "Why doesn't he save you? If the LORD likes you, why doesn't he help you?"

Psa 22:9 It was you who brought me safely through birth, and when I was a baby, you kept me safe.

Psa 22:10 I have relied on you since the day I was born, and you have always been my God.

Psa 22:11 Do not stay away from me! Trouble is near, and there is no one to help.

Psa 22:12 Many enemies surround me like bulls; they are all around me, like fierce bulls from the land of Bashan.

Psa 22:13 They open their mouths like lions, roaring and tearing at me.

Psa 22:14 My strength is gone, gone like water spilled on the ground. All my bones are out of joint; my heart is like melted wax.

Psa 22:15 My throat is as dry as dust, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have left me for dead in the dust.

Psa 22:16 An evil gang is around me; like a pack of dogs they close in on me; they tear at my hands and feet.

Psa 22:17 All my bones can be seen. My enemies look at me and stare.

Psa 22:18 They gamble for my clothes and divide them among themselves.

Psa 22:19 O LORD, don't stay away from me! Come quickly to my rescue!

Psa 22:20 Save me from the sword; save my life from these dogs.

Psa 22:21 Rescue me from these lions; I am helpless before these wild bulls.

Psa 22:22 I will tell my people what you have done; I will praise you in their assembly:

Psa 22:23 "Praise him, you servants of the LORD! Honor him, you descendants of Jacob! Worship him, you people of Israel!

Psa 22:24 He does not neglect the poor or ignore their suffering; he does not turn away from them, but answers when they call for help."

Psa 22:25 In the full assembly I will praise you for what you have done; in the presence of those who worship you I will offer the sacrifices I promised.

Psa 22:26 The poor will eat as much as they want; those who come to the LORD will praise him. May they prosper forever!

Psa 22:27 All nations will remember the LORD. From every part of the world they will turn to him; all races will worship him.

Psa 22:28 The LORD is king, and he rules the nations.

Psa 22:29 All proud people will bow down to him; all mortals will bow down before him.

Psa 22:30 Future generations will serve him; they will speak of the Lord to the coming generation.

Psa 22:31 People not yet born will be told: "The Lord saved his people."

Psalms 22:1-31

Psalms 22 – The Servant of God Forsaken, Rescued, and Triumphant

*This is another psalm with a title: **To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn."** A Psalm of David. We can say that this is a Psalm sung to the Greatest Musician,*

to an unknown tune, by the Sweet Psalmist of Israel (2Sa 23:1). Here, David sings as more than an , but also as one of the greatest prophets ever to speak, pointing more to his Greater Son, Jesus the Messiah, than even to himself.

" This is a kind of gem among the Psalms, and is peculiarly excellent and remarkable. It contains those deep, sublime, and heavy sufferings of Christ, when agonizing in the midst of the terrors and pangs of divine wrath and death which surpass all human thought and comprehension." (Martin Luther, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. The agony of the Forsaken One.

1. (1-2) The cry of the forsaken.

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?

Why are You so far from helping Me,

And from the words of My groaning?

O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;

And in the night season, and am not silent.

a. **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me:** This psalm begins abruptly, with a disturbing scene: someone who knows and trusts God is **forsaken**, and cries out to God in agony.

i. This is a *Psalm of David*, and there were many instances in the life of David where he might write such an agonized poem. Before and after taking the throne of Israel, David lived in seasons of great danger and deprivation.

ii. While this psalm was certainly true of King David in his life experience, it – like many psalms – is even truer of Jesus the Messiah than of David. Jesus deliberately chose these words to describe His agony on the cross (Mat 27:46).

iii. "We can be fairly certain that Jesus was meditating on the Old Testament during the hours of his suffering and that he saw his crucifixion as a fulfillment of Psalms 22 particularly." (Boice)

iv. "I doubt not that David, though he had an eye to his own condition in diverse passages here used, yet was carried forth by the Spirit of prophecy beyond himself, and unto Christ, to whom alone it truly and fully agrees." (Poole)

b. **My God, My God:** This opening is powerful on at least two levels. The cry "**My God**" shows that the Forsaken One truly did have a relationship with God. He was a victim of the cruelty of men, but the cry and the complaint is to **God** – even **My God** – and not to or against man. Second, the repetition of the plea shows the intensity of the agony.

i. "Then it was that he felt in soul and body the horror of God's displeasure against sin, for which he had undertaken." (Trapp)

c. **Why have You forsaken Me?** There is a note of *surprise* in this cry and in the following lines. The Forsaken One seems bewildered; "Why would My God forsake Me? Others may deserve such, but I cannot figure out why He would forsake Me."

i. We may easily imagine a situation in the life of King David where he experienced this. Many times he found himself in seemingly impossible circumstances and wondered why God did not rescue him immediately.

ii. Yet beyond David and his life, this agonized cry and the intentional identification of Jesus with these words are some of the most intense and mysterious descriptions of what Jesus experienced on the cross.

Jesus had known great pain and suffering (both physical and emotional) during His life. Yet He had never known separation or alienation from God His Father. At this moment He experienced what He had not yet ever experienced. There was a significant sense in which Jesus rightly felt **forsaken** by God the Father on the cross.

iii. On the cross, a holy transaction took place. God the Father regarded God the Son as if He were a sinner. As the Apostle Paul would later write, *God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* (2Co 5:21)

iv. Yet Jesus not only endured the *withdrawal* of the Father's fellowship, but also the actual outpouring of the Father's *wrath* upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity. "This was the blackness and darkness of his horror; then it was that he penetrated the depths of the caverns of suffering." (Spurgeon)

v. "To be forsaken means to have the light of God's countenance and the sense of his presence eclipsed, which is what happened to Jesus as he bore the wrath of God against sin for us." (Boice)

vi. "It was necessary that he should feel the loss of his Father's smile, – for the condemned in hell must have tasted of that bitterness – and therefore the Father closed the eye of his love, put the hand of justice before the smile of his face, and left his Son to cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" (Spurgeon)

vii. Horrible as this was, it fulfilled God's good and loving plan of redemption. Therefore Isaiah could say *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him* (Isa 53:10).

viii. At the same time, we cannot say that the separation between the Father and the Son at the cross was complete. Paul made this clear in 2Co 5:19 : *God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself* at the cross.

d. **Why have You forsaken Me?** There is a definite *question* in these words of David, and as Jesus appropriated them to Himself on the cross. What Jesus endured on the cross was so complex, so dark, and so mysterious that it was, at the moment, beyond emotional comprehension.

i. Spurgeon considered this question with an emphasis on the word **You**. “*Thou:*’ I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but *thou*, my God, my faithful friend, how canst thou leave me? This is worst of all, yea worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God.” (Spurgeon)

ii. We can imagine the answer to Jesus’ question: **Why?** “Because, My Son, You have chosen to stand in the place of guilty sinners. You, who have never known sin, have made the infinite sacrifice to become sin and receive My just wrath upon sin and sinners. You do this because of Your great love, and because of My great love.”

iii. Then the Father might give the Son a glimpse of His reward – the righteously-robed multitude of His people on heaven’s golden streets, “all of them singing their redeemer’s praise, all of them chanting the name of Jehovah and the Lamb; and this was a part of the answer to his question.” (Spurgeon)

e. **Why are You so far from helping Me?** David knew what it was like to feel the presence and the deliverance of God and had experienced such many times before.

Every prior time of help made this dramatic *absence* of God's help more devastating. Worse yet, there seemed to be *no explanation* for the lack of God's help; thus the question, "**Why?**"

i. No doubt David experienced this, but only as a shadow compared to how Jesus experienced this. Prior to the cross, Jesus lived every moment in conscious fellowship with God the Father, combined with a continual dependence upon the help of both the Father and the Spirit. At the cross, Jesus felt *helpless*, as it seemed that the Father was **so far from helping** Him.

f. **O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear:** A further dimension of David's agony was the fact that he made repeated, constant appeals to God and yet felt utterly unheard. His **groaning** was unanswered, his **cry** ignored.

i. David certainly experienced this; the greater Son of David experienced it in a far greater degree. On the cross Jesus felt abandoned by the Father, and felt that His groaning and cries went unanswered.

2. (3-5) *Remembrance of God's nature and prior help.*

**But You are holy,
Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
Our fathers trusted in You;
They trusted, and You delivered them.
They cried to You, and were delivered;
They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.**

a. **But You are holy:** The Forsaken One remembered God and His greatness, even when immersed in suffering. He did not curse or blaspheme God, and he knew that his present agony did not change God's

holiness (**You are holy**) or greatness (**Enthroned in the praises of Israel**).

i. We have the sense that the present crisis filled David (and the greater Son of David) with doubt and confusion, yet he would not allow doubts as to the holiness or greatness of God. Whatever he did *not* know in his present situation, he did know that God was **holy**.

ii. "Here is the triumph of faith – the Saviour stood like a rock in the wide ocean of temptation. High as the billows rose, so did his faith, like the coral rock, wax greater and stronger till it became an island of salvation to our shipwrecked souls. It is as if he had said, 'It matters not what I endure. Storms may howl upon me; men despise; devils tempt; circumstances overpower; and God himself forsake me, still God is holy; there is no unrighteousness in him.'" (Stevenson, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "We may not question the holiness of God, but we may argue from it, and use it as a plea in our petitions." (Spurgeon)

b. Our fathers trusted in You.... They cried to You, and were delivered: David also remembered how God had answered and **delivered** many times before. Strangely, this would add measures of both comfort and despair: *comfort*, knowing that he cried to the same God who had **delivered** before and who could deliver again; *despair*, knowing that the God who *had delivered* before now seemed so distant and silent.

i. We can almost hear the agony of the Forsaken One: "**They cried to You, and were delivered; I cry to You and am ignored.**"

ii. **Our fathers:** "The use of the plural pronoun '*our*' shows how one with his people Jesus was even on the cross." (Spurgeon)

3. (6-8) *Mocking the forsaken.*

**But I *am* a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
"He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"**

a. **But I *am* a worm, and no man:** The intensity of the conflict made David feel not only ignored, but insignificant. God seems to help other men, but seems to give no help to worms. The low standing he had in his own eyes and in the eyes of others simply added to his agony.

i. It was dramatically fulfilled in the greater Son of David, that on the cross He was **a reproach of men, and despised by the people**. Cruel men mocked Jesus in His greatest agony (Mat 27:39-44).

ii. "This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than men. What a contrast between '*I am*' and '*I am a worm*'!" (Spurgeon)

iii. "He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-trodden worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh; and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of himself when his body and soul had become a mass of

misery – the very essence of agony – in the dying pangs of crucifixion.” (Spurgeon)

b. **They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him”**: David’s misery multiplied at those who mocked and misunderstood his agony. They used it as an excuse to call into question his relationship with God, even as the friends of Job did with him in his suffering.

i. It was as if they said, “It seemed that he **trusted in the LORD**, but we all know that the LORD rescues those who trust in Him. It seemed that he delighted in God, but that must be false because he is not delivered.”

ii. **He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him**: If Jesus identified with the opening words of Psalms 22 with His great cry from the cross (Mat 27:46), then His enemies unwittingly identified with the scornful enemies of God and His Anointed in their mockery of Jesus on the cross (Mat 27:43 : *He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now*).

iii. Spurgeon preached a sermon (*Faith Among Mockers*) in which he considered the implication of this word against the Forsaken One, **“He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him.”**

- In a truly grace-filled man, his trust in God is known.
- This trust demonstrated by believing men is not understood by the world.
- This true faith will almost certainly be mocked at some time or another.
- The time shall come when the man of faith who has trusted in God shall be abundantly justified.

c. Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him:

This statement reveals the frequent ignorance and cruelty of those who oppose God and His people. It claimed to see no deliverance, when it would indeed come soon. It also questioned the delight of God in the Forsaken One, when God did and does truly delight in that one.

- i. "A most virulent irony, whereby they sought to cajole him out of his confidence, and so to drive him into utter desperation and destruction." (Trapp)

4. (9-11) A plea: "You are my God since the earliest days."

**But You are He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust *while* on My mother's breasts.
I was cast upon You from birth.
From My mother's womb
You *have been* My God.
Be not far from Me,
For trouble *is* near;
For *there is* none to help.**

a. But You are He who took Me out of the womb:

David understood – both for himself and, prophetically speaking, for the later-to-come Messiah – that in the depth of agony and the sense of abandonment, one could still appeal to God in remembrance of better times.

- i. The Forsaken One did not say, "Since I feel abandoned by God, I will abandon Him." He remained steadfast through the dark night of the soul, and still made appeal to the God who cared for Him since birth.
- ii. "That Child now fighting the great battle of his life, uses the mercy of his nativity as an argument with God. Faith finds weapons everywhere. He who wills to

believe shall never lack reasons for believing.”
(Spurgeon)

b. **Out of the womb...while on My mother's breasts...from birth...You have been My God:** The Forsaken One argued on good, logical grounds. He reminded God of the care given since His very earliest days. That prior grace might seem to be wasted if the sufferer was not rescued in His present crisis.

c. **Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help:** The plea for help is again eloquently and persuasively stated. God seems **far** away; but **trouble is near** – and **there is none to help**, so *You* must help me, God!

5. (12-18) *The agony of the forsaken.*

**Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.
They gape at Me *with* their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion.
I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.
For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;
I can count all My bones.
They look *and* stare at Me.
They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.**

a. **Many bulls have surrounded Me:** The Forsaken One again describes His crisis. He described the people

tormenting Him as **strong bulls of Bashan**, large animals proverbial for their strength. They surround Him and threaten Him.

i. "The *bull* is the emblem of brutal strength, that gores and tramples down all before it." (Clarke)

ii. "The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan, full of strength and fury; they stamped and foamed around the innocent One, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties." (Spurgeon)

b. **I am poured out like water:** The Forsaken One felt completely empty. He perceived no resource in Himself able to meet the crisis at hand. Whatever strength or resistance He had was **poured out like water** upon the ground.

i. "My heart faileth, my spirits are spent and gone like water, which once spilt can never be recovered; my very flesh is melted within me, and I am become as weak as water." (Poole)

c. **My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me:** This described the physical extremity of David at the time, but it also is an amazingly specific prophecy of the future suffering of the Son of David on the cross.

i. The deliberately awkward and strained position of the crucified man meant that on the cross Jesus could say, "**My bones are out of joint.**" David did not know the practice of crucifixion in his day, but he described the physical agony of it with the accuracy of a prophet of the LORD.

ii. There is also some reason to believe (based mainly on Joh 19:34) that on the cross Jesus suffered from

a ruptured heart, making the words "**My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me**" also amazingly specific.

iii. **My tongue clings to My jaws:** As was normal for anyone under the agony of crucifixion, Jesus suffered great thirst on the cross (Joh 19:28).

d. **You have brought me to the dust of death:** David used this moving poetic phrase to describe the extent of his misery. He probably had in mind the curse God pronounced upon Adam after his sin: *For dust you are, and to dust you shall return* (Gen 3:19). Since all humanity was contained in Adam, this curse extends to the entire human race, and David felt himself close **to the dust of death**.

i. Obviously, David did not die in the crisis described by this psalm; he lived to write it and others. He came to the edge of mortality when God **brought him to the dust of death**. Yet Jesus, the Son of David, did not merely come to the edge of death; He was plunged into **the dust of death** and into all of the cursedness implied by that. Jesus bore the sting of Adam's curse for us (Gal 3:13) so that we would not have to bear it ourselves.

e. **For dogs have surrounded Me; the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me:** David's crisis would be bad enough even if surrounded by sympathetic friends; his misery was multiplied because there were violent and wicked men on every side.

i. In His death, the Son of David had few sympathizers. Haters, scoffers, and mockers surrounded Jesus on the cross and sought to make His suffering worse (Mat 27:39-44, Mar 15:29-32).

f. **They pierced My hands and My feet:** Perhaps here David referred to wounds he received in struggling against these determined enemies; perhaps he wrote purely prophetically. In any regard, hundreds of years before the Romans adopted the Persian practice of crucifixion, the prophet David described the wounds of crucifixion that his Greater Son would bear.

i. The Masoretic Hebrew text of Psa 22:16 doesn't say *pierced*; it says "as a lion." Yet the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament – long before the Christian era – renders the Hebrew text as saying *pierced*. While the Masoretic text shouldn't be casually disregarded, there is good reason to side with the Septuagint and almost every other translation here. "It may even suggest that the Masoretic text was deliberately pointed in the way it was by later Jewish scholars to avoid what otherwise would be a nearly inescapable prophecy of Jesus' crucifixion." (Boice)

g. **I can count all My bones:** David examined his wounds and understood that he had no broken bones. The Son of David also, despite his great suffering on the cross, suffered no broken bones. John carefully noted this (Joh 19:31-37). This fact fulfilled this prophecy, as well as Psa 34:20 and the pattern of the Passover lamb as described in Exo 12:46 and Num 9:12.

h. **They look and stare at Me:** In his crisis, David was the focus of unwanted attention. His tormentors did not allow him the dignity of private suffering, but exposed all things to their **stare**. David's Great Son also found no place to hide from the unwanted stares of cruel, mocking men at the cross.

i. On the cross Jesus was the focus not only of mocking and humiliation (Mat 27:39-44, Mar 15:29-

32), but also of simple astonishment, as when the centurion said, "*Truly this was the Son of God!*" (Mat 27:54). Luke also noted, *the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned* (Luk 23:48).

ii. "'*They look and stare upon me.*' Oh, how different is that look which the awakened sinner directs to Calvary, when faith lifts up her eye to him who agonised, and bled, and died, for the guilty!" (Morison, cited in Spurgeon)

i. **They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots:** David was so humbled before his adversaries, so powerless against them, that they took even his clothing and used it for themselves.

i. As with other aspects of Psalms 22, this was fulfilled even *more* literally in the experience of Jesus than in the life of David. As was the custom of that time, Jesus was stripped naked or nearly naked for the cross, and soldiers gambled (**cast lots**) for his clothing at the very foot of the cross. Joh 19:23-24 and Mat 27:35 quote this line of Psalms 22 as being fulfilled.

ii. "Unholy eyes gazed insultingly upon the Saviour's nakedness, and shocked the sacred delicacy of his holy soul. The sight of the agonizing body ought to have ensured sympathy from the throng, but it only increased their savage mirth, as they gloated their cruel eyes upon his miseries." (Spurgeon)

6. (19-21a) *A plea for help and deliverance.*

**But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!**

**Deliver Me from the sword,
My precious *life* from the power of the dog.
Save Me from the lion's mouth
And from the horns of the wild oxen!**

a. **But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me:** The request of Psa 22:11 is here repeated. David seemed to believe that he could endure *anything* if he enjoyed the conscious presence of God. His plea is not focused on the change of his situation, but on the presence of God in the crisis.

b. **Hasten to help Me.... Deliver Me.... Save Me:** Picturing his adversaries as vicious animals (**the dog...the lion's mouth...the horns of the wild oxen**), David pled for the help and deliverance the presence of God brings.

i. These lines reflect not only the great danger and misery of both David and his Greater Son, but especially their trust in the LORD God as their deliverer. He and He alone is their hope.

ii. **Deliver Me from the sword:** "The wrath of God was the 'sword,' which took vengeance on all men...it was the 'flaming sword,' which kept men out of paradise." (Horne)

B. The answer to the Forsaken One.

1. (21b-23) The Forsaken One praises God among His people.

**You have answered Me.
I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!**

a. **You have answered Me:** After pouring out His soul in agony, now the Forsaken One has a glorious sense that God has **answered** Him. The crisis became bearable in the knowledge that God is not removed from His suffering nor silent in it.

i. The answer of God to the Forsaken One instantly meant that He no longer felt forsaken. The deliverance from the crisis itself may be yet to come, but the deliverance from the sense of being forsaken by God in the midst of the crisis was His. There is immense relief, joy, and peace in the words, "**You have answered Me.**"

ii. "As he thus cries, the conviction that he is heard floods his soul... It is like a parting burst of sunshine at the end of a day of tempest." (Maclaren)

iii. It is easy to see these words fulfilled in the experience of David; but they were perfectly completed in Jesus. This was also the resolution that another forsaken one – Job – fought so hard for. Even without an immediate deliverance from difficulty, there is immense comfort in knowing that God is there and that He is not silent in the midst of our crises.

iv. Knowing that Jesus fulfilled this prophetic psalm, it is fair to wonder just when He could speak or live the fulfillment of these words, "**You have answered Me.**" Perhaps – though it is impossible to say with certainty – it was while He still hung on the cross, yet after the mysterious, glorious transaction of bearing the sin of mankind. Perhaps it was after the triumphant announcement, *It is finished!* (Joh 19:30), yet before (or even in) the warm words, *Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit* (Luk 23:46). Those words point to a re-established

sense of fellowship replacing the prior sense of forsakenness.

b. **I will declare Your name to My brethren:** Having been delivered – if not from the crisis itself, certainly from the sense of being forsaken in the crisis – now the promise is made to glorify and **praise** the God of deliverance. *Others* needed to know of God's greatness in such extremity.

i. Heb 2:12 quotes the *second half* of Psalms 22 (specifically, Psa 22:22), proving clearly that the *entire* psalm points to Jesus, not just the agony of the first half.

ii. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed a glorious prayer, and one line of that prayer reads: *I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it* (Joh 17:26). Those words, prayed in the shadow of the cross, can be understood as a deliberate desire to fulfill this word in Psalms 22, **I will declare Your name to My brethren**. Jesus understood that His obedient work on the cross would bring great glory to His God and Father, declaring the greatness of His **name**.

iii. We may say that this section of Psalms 22 reflects the *primary* reason Jesus went to the cross: to glorify and obey His God and Father.

c. **You who fear the LORD, praise Him:** The command is given to **praise**, to **glorify**, and to **fear** the LORD. The God of such great deliverance deserves all three things from all humanity.

i. We prophetically see in this section Jesus doing two great things in the aftermath of His great work on the cross:

- Jesus declares God's name (**I will declare Your name to My brethren**).

- Jesus leads the redeemed in praise (**In the midst of the assembly I will praise You**).

ii. Of this second point, Spurgeon observed: "I like to think that when we pray on earth our prayers are not alone, but our great High Priest is there to offer our petitions with his own. When we sing on earth it is the same. Is not Jesus Christ in the midst of the congregation, gathering up all the notes which come from sincere lips, to put them into the golden censer, and to make them rise as precious incense before the throne of the infinite majesty?" (Spurgeon)

2. (24-25) *Praising the God who answers the forsaken.*

For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;

Nor has He hidden His face from Him;

But when He cried to Him, He heard.

My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;

I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

a. **For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted:** David's triumphant words – again, perfectly fulfilled in his greater son Jesus – reflect a profound spiritual wisdom and depth. The God who answers the Forsaken One allowed **the affliction of the afflicted**; yet **He has not despised or abhorred it**. God has used and would use that **affliction** to good and great purpose.

i. Some of God's people automatically associate all **affliction** with the disfavor of God. It is true that sometimes **affliction** may come as punishment (for the unbeliever) or as discipline (for the believer). Yet sometimes **affliction** is something God does not

despise, and uses to good effect in the lives of His people.

ii. It is in this sense that the words of Isa 53:10 were fulfilled: *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him*. The **affliction** was not **despised**.

b. **Nor has He hidden His face from Him**: Certainly David (and the greater Son of David) *felt* that the Father hid His face (*Why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me?... You do not hear, Psa 22:1-2*). Yet now, after God's answer has come (Psa 22:21 b), it is clear that He never did leave the **afflicted**, even in the midst of **the affliction**.

c. **But when He cried to Him, He heard**: The answer seemed an intolerably long time in coming, but it came. David and the Son of David could both say, "He heard My cry."

d. **My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay my vows**: There are two aspects to a right response to such a wonderful deliverance. The first is *public praise*, and the second is *keeping promises*.

3. (26-27) *Others who rejoice in the God who answers.*

**The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.**

a. **The poor shall eat and be satisfied**: If God shows such faithfulness to the afflicted, there is hope for **the poor**. The good God will take care of the **poor** who trust Him and **seek Him**. They will **praise the LORD** also.

i. The faithfulness of God to the Forsaken One becomes a foundation for His faithfulness to others in need, such as **the poor**. His satisfaction in the work of the Son of David means grace and blessing and *joy* (**Let your heart live forever!**) for others.

b. **Those who seek Him will praise the LORD**: There is a *promise* in this, that **those who seek Him** will in fact find the **LORD**, and thus they will **praise** Him.

i. "There are souls now weeping for sin and longing for a Savior who will soon find them, and then will become most hearty singers of the new song. They are coming, coming in their thousands even now. The music of praise shall be continued as long as the sun, and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. From generation to generation shall the name of the Lord be praised." (Spurgeon)

c. **All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD**: The faithfulness of God to the Forsaken One even becomes the base for bringing **all the ends of the world** to the **LORD**. Not only is it true that the LORD has *not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted* (Psa 22:24), but He uses that affliction to reach **all the ends of the world** for the knowledge of God, for repentance unto Him, and for His worship (**all the families of the nations shall worship before You**).

i. We may say that this section of Psalms 22 shows the

second great reason why Jesus went to the cross: out of simple love for those who would believe on Him and His saving work, and therefore **remember and turn to the LORD**. It is not an overly-sentimental exaggeration to say that Jesus thought of His

redeemed and loved them up to the cross and on the cross.

ii. Heb 12:2 says of Jesus: *who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame*. Psalms 22 powerfully displays that joy, both in His obedience to and glorifying of His God and Father, and the joy of rescuing and loving those who would trust on Him; that there would be *brethren* that He declared the name of God unto (Psa 22:22).

iii. "In that last happy interval, before he actually gave up his soul into his Father's hands, his thoughts rushed forward and found a blessed place of rest in the prospect that, as the result of his death, all the kindreds of the nations would worship before the Lord, and that by a chosen seed the Most High should be honored." (Spurgeon)

iv. "I think it is an absolutely wonderful thought and one that should move us to the most intent love for and devotion to Jesus Christ. You and I were in Jesus' thoughts at the very moment of his death. It was for you and me explicitly and for our salvation from sin that he was dying." (Boice)

4. (28-31) Enduring praise for a faithful God.

**For the kingdom *is* the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.
All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next*
generation,
They will come and declare His righteousness to a**

**people who will be born,
That He has done *this* .**

a. For the kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations: The experience of affliction and crisis did not make the formerly Forsaken One lose any sense of confidence in God's power and authority. The LORD's reign over the nations makes sense of both His prior crisis and the call to all nations to worship before the LORD (Psa 22:27).

i. This reminds us that one day Jesus *will* reign over all nations. It would be unthinkable otherwise. "Is Christ, the great King, satisfied to settle down in a corner of the world as ruler over one scanty province?" (Spurgeon)

ii. "Our new-born nature craves for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and prays for it instinctively." (Spurgeon)

b. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him: The LORD God is so highly exalted that all honor Him, both **the prosperous of the earth** and **those who go down to the dust**.

i. It is of note that though all honor the LORD, they honor Him in different ways. **The prosperous of the earth** enjoy a fellowship meal and **worship** God. In contrast, **those who go down to the dust** simply **bow before** the LORD in humble reverence.

ii. This has much the same idea as the later passage of the Apostle Paul, when he wrote: *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus*

Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Php 2:10-11).

iii. **Those who go down to the dust** suggests those who are rightly humbled, but it can also be understood in a broader sense. Earlier in the psalm, **dust** suggested the mortality of man and his place under the curse (Psa 22:15). David may here use **those who go down to the dust** as a simple representation of all humanity.

iv. If this is true, then the phrase **even he who cannot keep himself alive** follows the same thought. It is a suggestive phrase, especially considering the connection in this psalm with Jesus the Messiah, the greater Son of David. Of all humanity, Jesus was singular as One who *could***keep himself alive**. Jesus Himself said of His life, *No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again* (Joh 10:18).

c. **A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the LORD to the next generation:** The faithfulness of God unto the formerly Forsaken One is told throughout the generations, bringing great glory to the LORD. They will all look at what has been accomplished in and through the formerly Forsaken One and hear, **"That He has done this."**

- This results in *service* through the generations (**a posterity shall serve Him**).
- This results in *God's fame* through the generations (**It will be recounted of the LORD to the next generation**).
- This results in the *spread of the message of God's righteousness* through the generations (**They will**

come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born).

i. We can say that Jesus thought of His Jewish brothers on the cross (*My brethren, Psa 22:22*). He thought of the Gentiles who come into the assembly of the redeemed (*in the great congregation, Psa 22:25*). He even thought of future generations whom He would rescue and who would trust Him (**to the next generation...to a people who will be born, Psa 22:30-31**).

ii. "Finally the vision extends to unborn generations (30f.), in terms which anticipate the preaching of the cross, recounting God's righteousness (or *deliverance*, a secondary meaning of the word) revealed in the action He has taken." (Kidner)

iii. This all adds to the wonderful truth – true for King David of Israel, but far more gloriously fulfilled in Jesus Christ – that *none of the Forsaken One's sufferings were wasted*. Every drop of that cup of agony was and is used to the great glory of God.

iv. In the fullest measure, Jesus appropriated the victory of the second half of this psalm just as much as He did the agony of the first half. "Just before He died, Jesus cried out, 'It is finished' (Joh 19:30). This is a quotation from the last verse of Psalms 22. In our text that verse reads, 'he has done it,' referring to God as subject. But there is no object for the verb in Hebrew, and it can equally well be translated, 'It is finished.'" (Boice)

v. "The psalm which began with the cry of dereliction ends with the word *he has wrought it*, and announcement not far removed from our Lord's great cry, 'It is finished.'" (Kidner)

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Psa 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need.

Psa 23:2 He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

Psa 23:3 He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised.

Psa 23:4 Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, LORD, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

Psa 23:5 You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honored guest and fill my cup to the brim.

Psa 23:6 I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.

Psalms 23:1-6

Psalms 23 – The LORD Is My Shepherd and My Host

*Like many others, this beloved psalm bears the simple title **A Psalm of David**. Most account it to be a psalm of David's maturity, but with vivid remembrance of his youth as a shepherd. Charles Spurgeon wrote, " I like to recall the fact that this psalm was written by David, probably when he was a king. He had been a shepherd, and he was not ashamed of his former occupation."*

"It [Psalms 23] has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dungeon more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the sea-shore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, of captives in

dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner, and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master, and consoled those whom, dying, he left behind mourning, not so much that he was gone, as because they were left behind, and could not go, too." (Henry Ward Beecher, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

"Millions of people have memorized this psalm, even those who have learned few other Scripture portions. Ministers have used it to comfort people who are going through severe personal trials, suffering illness, or dying. For some, the words of this psalm have been the last they have ever uttered in life." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. The LORD as Shepherd sustains.

1. (1) *A declaration and its immediate result.*

**The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.**

a. **The LORD is my shepherd:** David thought about God, the God of Israel; as he thought about his relationship with God, he made the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep. God was like a **shepherd** to David, and David was like a sheep to God.

i. In one sense, this was not unusual. There are other references to this analogy between the deity and his followers in ancient Middle Eastern cultures. "In all Eastern thought, and very definitely in Biblical literature, a king is a shepherd." (Morgan)

ii. It is also a familiar idea throughout the Bible that the LORD is a shepherd to His people. The idea begins as early as the Book of Genesis, where Moses called

the LORD *the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel* (Gen 49:24).

- In Psa 28:9 David invited the LORD to shepherd the people of Israel, and to *bear them up forever*. Psa 80:1 also looks to the LORD as the *Shepherd of Israel, who would lead Joseph like a flock*.

- Ecc 12:11 speaks of the words of the wise, which *are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd*.

- Isa 40:11 tells us that the LORD *will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm*. Mic 7:14 invites the LORD to *Shepherd Your people with Your staff...As in days of old*.

- Zec 13:7 speaks of the Messiah as the Shepherd who will be struck, and the sheep scattered (quoted in Mat 26:31).

- In Joh 10:11; Joh 10:14, Jesus clearly spoke of Himself as the good shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep and who can say, *"I know My sheep, and am known by My own."* Heb 13:20 speaks of Jesus as *that great Shepherd of the sheep*, 1Pe 2:25 calls Jesus *the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls*, and 1Pe 5:4 calls Jesus *the Chief Shepherd*.

- The idea of Jesus as the Good Shepherd was precious to early Christians. One of the more common motifs in catacomb paintings was Jesus as a shepherd, with a lamb carried across His shoulders.

iii. It's remarkable that the LORD would call Himself our shepherd. "In Israel, as in other ancient societies, a shepherd's work was considered the lowest of all works. If a family needed a shepherd, it was always the youngest son, like David, who got this unpleasant assignment...Jehovah has chosen to be our shepherd, David says. The great God of the universe has

stooped to take just such care of you and me.”
(Boice)

iv. “Saith Rabbi Joseph Bar Hamna, there is not a more contemptible office than that of a shepherd.... But God disdaineth not to feed his flock, to guide, to govern, to defend them, to handle and heal them, to tend and take care of them.” (Trapp)

v. David knew this metaphor in a unique way, having been a shepherd himself. “David uses the most comprehensive and intimate metaphor yet encountered in the Psalms, preferring usually the more distant ‘king’ or ‘deliverer’, or the impersonal ‘rock’, ‘shield’, etc.; whereas the shepherd lives with his flock and is everything to it: guide, physician and protector.” (Kidner)

b. **The LORD is my shepherd:** David knew this in a personal sense. He could say, “**my shepherd.**” It wasn’t just that the LORD was a shepherd for others in a theoretical sense; He was a real, personal **shepherd** for David himself.

i. “A sheep is an object of property, not a wild animal; its owner sets great store by it, and frequently it is bought with a great price. It is well to know, as certainly as David did, that we belong to the Lord. There is a noble tone of confidence about this sentence. There is no ‘if’ nor ‘but,’ nor even ‘I hope so;’ but he says, ‘The Lord *is* my shepherd.’” (Spurgeon)

ii. “The sweetest word of the whole is that monosyllable, ‘*My.*’ He does not say, ‘The Lord is the shepherd of the world at large, and leadeth forth the multitude as his flock,’ but ‘The Lord is *my* shepherd;’ if he be a Shepherd to no one else, he is a Shepherd

to *me*; he cares for *me*, watches over *me*, and preserves *me*." (Spurgeon)

iii. Overwhelmingly, the idea behind God's role as **shepherd** is of *loving care and concern*. David found comfort and security in the thought that God cared for him like a shepherd cares for his sheep.

iv. David felt that he *needed* a shepherd. The heart of this psalm doesn't connect with the self-sufficient. But those who acutely sense their need – the *poor in spirit* Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5:3) – find great comfort in the idea that God can be a shepherd to them in a personal sense.

v. Spurgeon said that before a man can truly say, "**the LORD is my shepherd**," he must first feel himself to be a sheep by nature, "for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep." He must relate to a sheep in its foolishness, its dependency, and in the warped nature of its will.

vi. "A sheep, saith Aristotle, is a foolish and sluggish creature...aptest of anything to wander, though it feel no want, and unablest to return...a sheep can make no shift to save itself from tempests or inundation; there it stands and will perish, if not driven away by the shepherd." (Trapp)

c. **I shall not want**: For David, the fact of God's shepherd-like care was the end of dissatisfied need. He said, "**I shall not want**" both as a declaration and as a decision.

i. "**I shall not want**" means, "All my needs are supplied by the LORD, my shepherd."

ii. "**I shall not want**" means, "I decide to not desire more than what the LORD, my shepherd gives."

2. (2) *How the Shepherd sustains.*

**He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.**

a. **He makes me to lie down:** The LORD as a shepherd knew how to make David rest when he needed it, just as a literal shepherd would care for his sheep. The implication is that a sheep doesn't always know what it needs and what is best for itself, and so needs help from the shepherd.

i. "The loveliest image afforded by the natural world, is here represented to the imagination; that of a flock, feeding in verdant meadows, and reposing, in quietness, by the rivers of water, running gently through them." (Horne)

b. **To lie down in green pastures:** The shepherd also knew the good places to make his sheep rest. He faithfully guides the sheep to **green pastures**.

i. Philip Keller (in *A Shepherd Looks at Psalms 23*) writes that sheep do not lie down easily and will not unless four conditions are met. Because they are timid, they will not lie down if they are afraid. Because they are social animals, they will not lie down if there is friction among the sheep. If flies or parasites trouble them, they will not lie down. Finally, if sheep are anxious about food or hungry, they will not lie down. Rest comes because the shepherd has dealt with fear, friction, flies, and famine.

c. **He leads me beside the still waters:** The shepherd knows when the sheep needs **green pastures**, and knows when the sheep needs **the still waters**. The images are rich with the sense of comfort, care, and rest.

B. The LORD as Shepherd leads.

1. (3) *Where the Shepherd leads and why.*

**He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.**

a. **He restores my soul:** The tender care of the shepherd described in the previous verse had its intended effect. David's soul was restored by the figurative *green pastures* and *still waters* the shepherd brought him to.

i. **Restores** has the idea of the rescue of a lost one. "It may picture the straying sheep brought back." (Kidner)

ii. "In Hebrew the words 'restores my soul' can mean 'brings me to repentance' (or conversion)." (Boice)

iii. "'*He restoreth my soul.*' He restores it to its original purity, that was now grown foul and black with sin; for also, what good were it to have '*green*' pastures and a *black* soul!" (Baker, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **He leads me:** The shepherd was a *guide*. The sheep didn't need to know where the green pastures or still waters were; all it needed to know was where the shepherd was. Likewise, the LORD would guide David to what he needed.

c. **In the paths of righteousness:** The leadership of the shepherd did not only comfort and restore David; He also guides His sheep into **righteousness**. God's guidance of David had a *moral* aspect.

i. "They are thenceforth led in 'the path of righteousness'; in the way of holy obedience. Obstructions are removed; they are strengthened, to walk and run in the paths of God's commandments." (Horne)

d. **For His name's sake:** The shepherd guides the sheep with an overarching view to the credit and glory of the shepherd's own **name**.

i. **For His name's sake:** "To display the glory of his grace, and not on account of any *merit* in me. God's motives of conduct towards the children of men are derived from the perfections and goodness of his own nature." (Clarke)

2. (4) *The gift of the Shepherd's presence.*

**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

a. **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death:** This is the first dark note in this beautiful psalm. Previously David wrote of *green pastures* and *still waters* and *paths of righteousness*. Yet when following the LORD as shepherd, one may still **walk through the valley of the shadow of death**.

i. David used this powerful phrase to speak of some kind of dark, fearful experience. It is an imprecise phrase, yet its poetry makes perfect sense.

- It is a **valley**, not a mountaintop or broad meadow. A **valley** suggests being hedged in and surrounded.

- It is a valley of **the shadow** of death – not facing the substance of death itself, but **the shadow of death**, casting its dark, fearful outline across David's path.

- It is a valley of the shadow **of death**, facing what seemed to David as the ultimate defeat and evil.

ii. Notably, David recognized that under the shepherd's leading, he may **walk through** the valley of the shadow of death. It isn't his destination or dwelling place. Like the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, David might say that *all of life* is lived under **the shadow of death**, and it is the conscious presence of the LORD as shepherd that makes it bearable.

iii. This line is especially suggestive when we read this psalm with an eye toward Jesus, the Great Shepherd. We understand that a shadow is not tangible but is cast by something that is. One can rightly say that we face only **the shadow of death** because Jesus took the *full reality* of death in our place.

b. **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death:** This line from the psalm – and the psalm as a whole – has proven itself precious to many a dying saint through the ages. They have been comforted, strengthened, and warmed by the thought that the LORD would shepherd them **through the valley of the shadow of death**.

i. Near death, the saint still calmly walks – he does not need to quicken his pace in alarm or panic. Near death, the saint does not walk *in* the valley, but **through** the valley.

ii. "Death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains.... Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us." (Spurgeon)

iii. "It has an inexpressibly delightful application to the dying; but it is for the living, too.... The words are not in the future tense, and therefore are not reserved for a distant moment." (Spurgeon)

c. **I will fear no evil:** Despite every dark association with the idea of **the valley of the shadow of death**, David could resolutely say this because he was under the care of the LORD his shepherd,. Even in a fearful place, the presence of the shepherd banished the **fear** of evil.

i. We might say that the shepherd's presence did not eliminate the *presence* of evil, but certainly the **fear of evil**.

d. **For You are with me:** This emphasizes that it is the *presence* of the shepherd that eliminated the **fear of evil** for the sheep. No matter his present environment, David could look to the fact of God's shepherd-like presence and know, "**You are with me**" and "**I will fear no evil.**"

i. Significantly, it is at the dangerous moment pictured in the psalm that the "He" of Psa 23:1-3 changes to "**You**." The LORD as Shepherd is now in the second person.

e. **Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me:** The **rod** and the **staff** were instruments used by a shepherd. The idea is of a sturdy walking stick, used to gently (as much as possible) guide the sheep and protect them from potential predators.

i. There is some debate among commentators as to whether David had the idea of two separate instruments (the **rod** and the **staff**) or one instrument used two ways. The Hebrew word for **rod** (*shaybet*) here seems to simply mean "a stick" with a variety of applications. The Hebrew word for **staff** (*mishaynaw*) seems to speak of "a support" in the sense of a walking stick.

ii. Kidner notes: "The *rod* (a cudgel worn at the belt) and *staff* (to walk with, and to round up the flock)

were the shepherd's weapon and implement: the former for defence (*cf.* 1Sa 17:35), and the latter for control – since discipline is security."

iii. Maclaren writes: "The rod and the staff seem to be two names for one instrument, which was used both to beat off predatory animals and to direct the sheep."

iv. These instruments (or instrument) of guidance were a **comfort** to David. It helped him – even in **the valley of the shadow of death** – to know that God guided him, even through correction. It is a great **comfort** to know that God will correct us when we need it.

C. The LORD as Host.

1. (5) *Blessing in the presence of danger.*

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

a. **You prepare a table before me:** Without departing from the previous picture of *the valley of the shadow of death*, David envisioned the provision and goodness given by the LORD as a host, inviting David to a rich **table** prepared for him.

i. "Here the *second allegory* begins. A magnificent banquet is provided by a most liberal and benevolent host; who has not only the *bounty* to feed me, but power to protect me; and, though surrounded by *enemies*, I sit down to this table with confidence, knowing that I shall feast in perfect security." (Clarke)

ii. David gives a beautiful picture: **table** suggests *bounty*; **prepare** suggests *foresight and care*; **before**

me suggests the personal connection.

b. **In the presence of my enemies:** This is a striking phrase. The goodness and care suggested by the prepared **table** is set right in the midst of **the presence of my enemies**. The host's care and concern doesn't eliminate **the presence of my enemies** but enables the experience of God's goodness and bounty even in their midst.

i. "This is the condition of God's servant – always conflict, but always a spread table." (Maclaren)

ii. "When a soldier is in the presence of his enemies, if he eats at all he snatches a hasty meal, and away he hastens to the fight. But observe: 'Thou *preparest* a table,' just as a servant does when she unfolds the damask cloth and displays the ornaments of the feast on an ordinary peaceful occasion. Nothing is hurried, there is no confusion, no disturbance, the enemy is at the door and yet God prepares a table, and the Christian sits down and eats as if everything were in perfect peace." (Spurgeon)

c. **You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over:** Despite the dangers about and the **presence of enemies**, David enjoyed the richness of his host's goodness. He was refreshed by a **head** anointed **with oil**; his **cup** was over-filled.

i. "Beloved, I will ask you now a question. How would it be with you if God had filled your cup in proportion to your faith? How much would you have had in your cup?" (Spurgeon)

ii. "Those that have this happiness must carry their cup upright, and see that it overflows into their poor brethren's emptier vessels." (Trapp)

2. (6) *Blessing for the future.*

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever.**

a. **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:** The host's care brought the **goodness and mercy** of God to David, and he lived in the faithful expectation of it continuing **all the days of his life**.

i. "*Mercy* is the covenant-word rendered 'steadfast love' elsewhere.... Together with *goodness* it suggests the steady kindness and support that one can count on in the family or between firm friends." (Kidner)

ii. "We are well escorted, with a Shepherd in front and these twin angels behind!" (Meyer)

iii. "These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer." (Spurgeon)

b. **And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever:** The psalm ends with the calmest assurance that he would enjoy the presence of the LORD **forever** – both in his days on this earth and beyond.

i. "In the Old Testament world, to eat and drink at someone's table created a bond of mutual loyalty, and could be the culminated token of a covenant.... So to be God's guest is to be more than an acquaintance, invited for a day. It is to live with Him." (Kidner)

ii. "While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I

shall only go to dwell in the upper story of the house of the Lord for ever.” (Spurgeon)

The King of Glory

Psa 24:1 The world and all that is in it belong to the LORD; the earth and all who live on it are his.

Psa 24:2 He built it on the deep waters beneath the earth and laid its foundations in the ocean depths.

Psa 24:3 Who has the right to go up the LORD's hill? Who may enter his holy Temple?

Psa 24:4 Those who are pure in act and in thought, who do not worship idols or make false promises.

Psa 24:5 The LORD will bless them and save them; God will declare them innocent.

Psa 24:6 Such are the people who come to God, who come into the presence of the God of Jacob.

Psa 24:7 Fling wide the gates, open the ancient doors, and the great king will come in.

Psa 24:8 Who is this great king? He is the LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, victorious in battle.

Psa 24:9 Fling wide the gates, open the ancient doors, and the great king will come in.

Psa 24:10 Who is this great king? The triumphant LORD—he is the great king!

Psalms 24:1-10

Psalms 24 – The Great and Sovereign God

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. Many think this psalm was written upon the occasion of the entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem during the reign of David (2 Samuel 6). Yet Charles Spurgeon correctly wrote, "The eye of the Psalmist looked, however, beyond the typical upgoing of the ark to the sublime ascension of the King of glory."*

A. The great and sovereign God.

1. (1) *The declaration: The whole world belongs to the LORD God.*

**The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell therein.**

a. **The earth is the LORD's:** David was a noble, successful king – but of a relatively small and insignificant kingdom. One might easily think that the gods of the Egyptians or Assyrians were greater because those kingdoms were greater. Yet David rightly knew that the **LORD**, Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, was God of all the **earth**.

b. **The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness:** It wasn't enough for David to say that the entire earth belonged to the **LORD**; he added that **all its fullness** also belonged to Him. It's difficult to think of a more sweeping statement of God's ownership.

i. "The '*fulness*' of the earth may mean its harvests, its wealth, its life, or its worship; in all these senses the Most High God is Possessor of all. The earth is full of God; he made it full and he keeps it full." (Spurgeon)

ii. There is a sense in which the "world" belongs to Satan. Satan is called *the god of this age* (2Co 4:4), and when he tempted Jesus with the promise of giving Him the kingdoms of this world, Jesus did not question the devil's ability to do so. Yet Satan can only do anything at God's allowance, so God's ultimate ownership is true.

iii. Paul quoted **the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness** twice (1Co 10:26; 1Co 10:28) to establish the principle that no food is in itself unclean, and that

there is in fact nothing that actually belongs to the false gods the pagans made offerings unto.

c. **The world and those who dwell therein:** God's ownership of the earth extends to the *people* who live upon it. Through the rights of *creation* and *continuing provision*, God has a claim upon every person who has ever lived.

2. (2) *The reason: God is creator.*

**For He has founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the waters.**

a. **For He has founded it upon the seas:** God has the right to the earth and all who dwell upon it because He created both it and them. Specifically, David looks back to the creation account of Genesis 1 and remembers the creation of land in the midst of earth's waters on the third day of creation.

b. **And established it upon the waters:** To the best of our knowledge, David had never ventured more than a few hundred miles beyond Israel, and had never seen a large sea other than the Mediterranean (perhaps also the Red Sea). David never saw a modern globe or earth projection. Yet he knew that the waters of the earth dominated the globe, so much so that it could be said that the earth is in the midst of the waters instead of the waters in the midst of the earth's land.

i. To David, this may have seemed to be a wonderful engineering marvel – that God could establish the earth **upon the waters**.

ii. "*Upon* could be translated 'above', as in Psa 8:1." (Kidner)

B. Received by the great and sovereign God.

1. (3) *The question asked – whom does God receive?*

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

a. **Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?** In light of God's sovereign ownership of the earth and all who live upon it, David wondered exactly who had the right to stand before God. This wasn't about mountain climbing or hill ascending ability, but about the *right* to come before God.

b. **Who may stand in His holy place?** David here clarified his previous question. David asked, "Who has the right to stand before God at His holy temple, in the holy place?"

i. This is a question that used to concern mankind much more than it does in our present day. There was a time when men and women genuinely wondered what was required of them to make them right with God. Today, it seems the most-asked question is something like, "How can I be happy?"

ii. Personal happiness is important; but it isn't more important than being in right relationship with our Creator and Provider. David not only asked an important question, but the *most* important question.

2. (4) *The answer to the question: the moral character of the one whom God receives.*

**He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,
Nor sworn deceitfully.**

a. **He who has clean hands and a pure heart:** This speaks of a man or woman who is pure in both their actions (**hands**) and intentions (**heart**). This one can *ascend the hill of the LORD* and *stand in His holy place*.

i. David already established that God ruled the earth; now he declared that God rules the earth on a *moral*

foundation. He is concerned with the moral behavior of mankind.

ii. **Clean hands** are important for good hygiene, but this speaks of much more than washing with water. Pontius Pilate washed his hands, but they were not clean.

iii. "But '*clean hands*' would not suffice, unless they were connected with '*a pure heart*.' True religion is heart-work." (Spurgeon)

b. **Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol:** The one accepted by God also rejects idolatry, in his actions but especially in his **soul**.

i. "The meaning of *lift up his soul* is illuminated by Psa 25:1, where it is parallel to 'trust'." (Kidner)

c. **Nor sworn deceitfully:** The words we speak are a good indication of the state of our heart, the inner man or woman (Mat 12:34). One who makes deceptive promises finds no welcome from God.

i. David understood all this under the general principles of the Old Covenant, in which God promised to bless and receive obedient Israel, and also promised to curse and afflict a disobedient Israel (Deuteronomy 27-28).

ii. Outside the terms of the Old Covenant that God made with Israel, these answers of David may cause one to despair. It's easy to look at this list and see that my hands are not always clean; my heart is not always pure. Idolatry can be both subtle and stubborn in my heart. I also find it too easy to make promises with at least a tinge of deceit.

iii. Fortunately, God established a better covenant, a new covenant through the person and work of Jesus. Under the new covenant, we see that Jesus is the one

who has clean hands and a pure heart, perfectly so. Jesus has *never* **lifted up his soul to an idol**, and has *never* **sworn deceitfully**. In *His* righteousness, given to all who believe (Rom 3:22), we can ascend His holy hill and stand in His holy place.

iv. "Our Lord Jesus Christ could ascend into the hill of the Lord because his hands were clean and his heart was pure, and if we by faith in him are conformed to his image we shall enter too." (Spurgeon)

v. Nevertheless, David's principle is also accurate under the New Covenant in this sense: the conduct of one's life is a reflection of his fellowship with God. As John wrote: *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth* (1Jn 1:6). We might say that under the Old Covenant a righteous walk was the *precondition* for fellowship with God; under the New Covenant a righteous walk is the *result* of fellowship with God, founded on faith. Yet under both covenants, God cares very much about the moral conduct of mankind, especially those who identify themselves as His people.

3. (5) *The promise of blessing to the righteous man.*

**He shall receive blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.**

a. **He shall receive blessing from the LORD:** God knows and cares about the moral behavior of men and women. He rewards those who honor Him with their lives.

i. This blessing may be understood sometimes in *rewards* that God grants to the obedient; other times

it may be understood as the *natural result* of living according to God's wise order.

ii. "It is here very observable, that the character of a right and acceptable worshipper of God is not taken from his nation and relation to Abraham, or from all those costly and laborious rites and ceremonies of the law, in which the generality of the Israelites pleased themselves, but in moral and spiritual duties, which most of them grossly neglected." (Poole)

iii. **He shall receive blessing:** "Perhaps alluding to Obed-edom, at whose house the ark had been lodged, and on whom God had poured out especial blessings." (Clarke)

b. And righteousness from the God of his salvation:

David here spoke in the idiom of the Old Covenant, where right standing with God might be assumed from the life of the obedient. At the same time, David wrote of a *received* righteousness that came **from the God of his salvation**.

i. We might say that the obedient life spoken of in Psa 24:4 is the *product* of the received righteousness obtained by faith, the **righteousness from the God of his salvation**.

ii. Even with the important distinctions between the Old and New Covenants, it is a mistake to say that salvation was by works under the Old Covenant. One might say that in some sense *blessing* was by works of obedience, but **righteousness** was always and is always **from the God of his salvation**.

iii. Under the Old Covenant, that faith was often expressed by the trust in the work of sacrifice, looking forward to the ultimate, perfect sacrifice promised by God and fulfilled in the work of Jesus at the cross.

4. (6) *A description of the blessed and righteous ones.*

**This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face. Selah**

a. **This is Jacob:** This was David's way of identifying *God's covenant people*. The blessed and righteous ones have entered into covenant with God.

b. **The generation of those who seek Him:** The blessed and righteous ones do more than enter into covenant with God; they also *pursue* Him with a continual seeking. This is something each **generation** must do afresh.

i. "Heaven is a generation of finders, of possessors, of enjoyers, seekers of God. But here we are a generation of seekers." (Sibbes, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Who seek Your face:** The idea is intensified by repetition, by description (to **seek Your face** is even closer than seeking **Him**), and by the use of a contemplative pause (**Selah**).

C. Receiving the great King.

1. (7-8) *A call to welcome the God who reigns over all the earth.*

**Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.**

a. **Lift up your heads, O you gates:** The first section of this psalm declared the greatness of God. The second section spoke of how man can come into relationship with this great God. Now the third section welcomes God unto His people by the opening of the **gates**.

i. "When the King of England wishes to enter the city of London, through the Temple Bar, the gate being closed against him, the herald demands entrance. 'Open the gate.' From within a voice is heard, 'Who is there?' The herald answers, 'The King of England!' The gate is at once opened, and the king passes, amidst the joyful acclamations of his people." (Evans, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **And the King of glory shall come in:** If we assume that King David wrote this psalm either for the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem or in commemoration of it, we can also see that "the singer saw in that ceremony the symbol of greater things." (Morgan)

i. "Ancient rabbinical sources tell us that, in the Jewish liturgy, Psalms 24 was always used in worship on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is our Sunday. So, putting these facts together, we may assume that these were the words being recited by the temple priests at the very time the Lord Jesus Christ mounted a donkey and ascended the rocky approach to Jerusalem." (Boice)

ii. Therefore we can make several connections to this idea that **the King of glory shall come in.**

- This was fulfilled when the ark of the covenant came to Jerusalem (2Sa 6:11-18).
- This was fulfilled when the ascended Jesus entered into heaven (Act 1:9-10; Eph 1:20).
- This is fulfilled when an individual heart opens to Jesus as King.

c. **And the King of glory shall come in:** The idea is plain; it is *assumed* that when God is welcomed with open **gates** and **doors**, He is pleased to **come in**. The

King of glory will meet with His people when approached correctly and the doors are opened unto Him.

i. The idea that the doors or gates might be opened unto God, but He would not come unto man, isn't even considered. When we draw near to Him, He draws near to us (Jas 4:8).

ii. "For the Church is Christ's temple; and every faithful soul is a gate thereof to let him in, as in Rev 3:20." (Trapp)

iii. In Rev 3:20 this idea is presented as a plea from Jesus unto His people: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.* Jesus promised: open the door, and I will come in.

iv. "Surely, if there were doors and gates that needed to be lifted up before Christ could enter into heaven, much more are there doors and gates that must be opened to receive him into our hearts." (Spurgeon)

v. "We must have the King of Glory *within*. To have Him without, even though He be on the Throne, will not avail." (Meyer)

c. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty: Perhaps with a touch of amazement, David notes that the same God who responds to man's welcome is still the **King of glory**; He is **mighty in battle**. His openness to man doesn't diminish His glory or might.

i. "The expression *mighty in battle* is but a stronger form of God's title of 'warrior' first heard in the song of victory at the Red Sea (Exo 15:3)." (Kidner)

2. (9-10) *Repetition for the sake of emphasis.*

Lift up your heads, O you gates!
Lift up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He *is* the King of glory. Selah

a. **Lift up your heads, O you gates:** As is common in Hebrew poetry, *repetition* communicates *emphasis*. The ideas of Psa 24:7-8 were important and glorious enough to repeat.

i. When Jesus entered Jerusalem at the Triumphal Entry, Matthew tells us that the city asked, "Who is this?" (Mat 21:10). If they had known who He was, the response should have been, "**The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory!**"

ii. **LORD of hosts:** "Under whose command are all the hosts of heaven and earth, angels and men, and all other creatures." (Poole)

iii. **LORD of hosts:** "In fact, the conception underlying the name is that of the universe as an ordered whole, a disciplined army, a cosmos obedient to His voice." (Maclaren)

b. **He is the King of glory. Selah:** This psalm rightly ends on a reflective pause. It is no small thing that this **King of glory** stoops down to receive men and even to be received by men.

i. G. Campbell Morgan connected these three psalms of David (22, 23, and 24) in an interesting way. "By our calendars, yesterday He passed through Psalms 22. Today He is exercising the office of Psalms 23. Tomorrow, He will exercise finally the authority of Psalms 24." (Morgan)

Teach Me Your Paths

Psa 25:1 To you, O LORD, I offer my prayer;

Psa 25:2 in you, my God, I trust. Save me from the shame of defeat; don't let my enemies gloat over me!

Psa 25:3 Defeat does not come to those who trust in you, but to those who are quick to rebel against you.

Psa 25:4 Teach me your ways, O LORD; make them known to me.

Psa 25:5 Teach me to live according to your truth, for you are my God, who saves me. I always trust in you.

Psa 25:6 Remember, O LORD, your kindness and constant love which you have shown from long ago.

Psa 25:7 Forgive the sins and errors of my youth. In your constant love and goodness, remember me, LORD!

Psa 25:8 Because the LORD is righteous and good, he teaches sinners the path they should follow.

Psa 25:9 He leads the humble in the right way and teaches them his will.

Psa 25:10 With faithfulness and love he leads all who keep his covenant and obey his commands.

Psa 25:11 Keep your promise, LORD, and forgive my sins, for they are many.

Psa 25:12 Those who have reverence for the LORD will learn from him the path they should follow.

Psa 25:13 They will always be prosperous, and their children will possess the land.

Psa 25:14 The LORD is the friend of those who obey him and he affirms his covenant with them.

Psa 25:15 I look to the LORD for help at all times, and he rescues me from danger.

Psa 25:16 Turn to me, LORD, and be merciful to me, because I am lonely and weak.

Psa 25:17 Relieve me of my worries and save me from all my troubles.

Psa 25:18 Consider my distress and suffering and forgive all my sins.

Psa 25:19 See how many enemies I have; see how much they hate me.

Psa 25:20 Protect me and save me; keep me from defeat. I come to you for safety.

Psa 25:21 May my goodness and honesty preserve me, because I trust in you.

Psa 25:22 From all their troubles, O God, save your people Israel!

Psalms 25:1-22

Psalms 25 – A Plea for Help from the Humble and Reverent

Like several other psalms, Psalms 25 is an acrostic, or nearly so; there are a few irregularities in the acrostic pattern. James Montgomery Boice suggested three reasons why there are nine acrostic psalms (9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145). First, the acrostic pattern is a literary device used to add beauty and form to the psalm. Second, it gives the sense that the subject is being covered completely, as if from A to Z. Third, the acrostic pattern may be a device used to encourage learning and memorization.

*This psalm is merely titled **A Psalm of David**. We do not know the precise time period it came from; David was so often in trouble that it could have been from several different points. It is a wonderful display of the heart of a well-taught believer in a season of crisis.*

"David is pictured in this Psalm as in a faithful miniature. His holy trust, his many conflicts, his great transgressions, his bitter repentance, and his deep distresses are all here; so

that we see the very heart of 'the man after God's own heart.'" (Charles Spurgeon)

A. Troubled by enemies, David lifts his soul to God.

1. (1-2) David casts his trust upon God.

To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

O my God, I trust in You;

Let me not be ashamed;

Let not my enemies triumph over me.

a. **To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul:** This is an expressive figure of speech speaking of the surrender, submission, and waiting upon God that David directed toward Yahweh (the **LORD**), the covenant God of Israel. It was as if David held his **soul** in outstretched hands up to heaven saying, "Here I am LORD, completely surrendered unto you."

i. "The very nature of such aspiration after God demands that it shall be exclusive. 'All in all or not at all' is the requirement of true devotion." (Maclaren)

ii. "Cares and pleasures are the weights which press the soul down to earth, and fasten here thereto; and it is the spirit of prayer, which must enable her to throw off those weights, to break these cords, and to 'lift up' herself to heaven." (Horne)

b. **O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed:**

As David declared his trust in God, he seemed to speak more to *himself* than to God. He assured himself of not only his trust in the LORD, but also the expected reward of that trust – to not be **ashamed** before either the LORD or his enemies.

c. **Let not my enemies triumph over me:** This gives some context to this psalm. Like many others, it was written from a time of trouble. David faced enemies who wanted the worst for him.

2. (3-5) *A plea to the God who helps.*

**Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed;
Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without
cause.**

Show me Your ways, O LORD;

Teach me Your paths.

Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You *are* the God of my salvation;

On You I wait all the day.

a. **Let no one who waits on You be ashamed:** The idea of **waits on You** isn't of passively doing nothing; rather, it is of an active service. The idea isn't of a waiting room, but of a waiter attending to every desire and need of the one being served. David included himself among those **who wait** upon the LORD, but also knew that others did – and wanted all of them to be vindicated publically and unashamed.

i. "This is not a petition, as the King James' version rendered it, but an affirmation of confidence."
(Morgan)

ii. The Biblical idea of **ashamed** is not primarily embarrassment (though sometimes it is used that way). The primary idea "is that of being let down or disappointed or of having trusted in something that in the end proves unworthy of our trust." (Boice) This is especially reflected in passages such as Rom 5:5 and Isa 49:23.

b. **Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause:** Instead of the servants of the LORD being publically embarrassed, David prayed that his enemies would suffer this shame.

c. **Show me Your ways...teach me Your paths...Lead me in Your truth:** This shows that though David longed

for public vindication, he was not haughty and proud. If he needed guidance or correction, he wanted God to give it, and to give it *before* any public humiliation, to *prevent* public humiliation.

i. "The petitioner reveals an earnest desire to do God's will by praying to know 'your ways,' 'your paths,' and 'your truth.'" (VanGemeren)

ii. We can be sure that no man or woman who has been shown the way by God, or taught in His paths, or led in His truth, has been led into sin or compromise that led to public disgrace and dishonor.

d. **For You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day:** Because David had received **salvation** from God, it made him want to **wait** upon the LORD all the more. It was an appropriate demonstration of commitment and gratitude to the God who had done so much for him.

i. We should regard the **salvation** David received here as being rescued in a broad sense. Spiritually speaking, he was rescued from despair and sin, both for now and in the life to come. Yet God also rescued his life and health again and again in the present age.

3. (6-7) *A plea for God to remember and to not remember.*

Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,

For they are from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;

According to Your mercy remember me,

For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.

a. **Remember, O LORD:** David asked God to **remember** His grace and goodness. First, he described them as **tender mercies**: *compassionate compassions*

(*racham racham*, with the repetition indicating intensity). Then, he used the plural of the wonderful word *lovingkindness* (*hesed*), which speaks of God's deep, covenant love.

i. "*Steadfast love*, or 'true love' (New English Bible) is that faithfulness to a covenant, to which marital devotion gives some analogy." (Kidner)

ii. "This is the love by which he enters into a favorable relationship with his people, promising to be their God." (Boice)

iii. David thought of this love in the plural – **lovingkindnesses** – as if God's covenant love was so great that it could not be thought of in the singular.

b. **For they are from of old:** David pressed his request to God on the basis of His prior work. "LORD, you have shown me great mercy and covenant love in the past; remember it now and do it again at my point of present need."

i. "A more correct translation would be 'from eternity.' David was a sound believer in the doctrine of God's eternal love. The Lord's loving-kindnesses are no novelties." (Spurgeon)

c. **Do not remember the sins of my youth:** Immediately after asking God to remember (Psa 25:6), David then asked God to *forget*. He wanted God to forget his own youthful sins (in the sense of forgiving them), and he wanted God to remember God's own faithfulness in prior times.

i. **Sins of my youth:** "Which, though long since committed, must not be remembered without remorse." (Trapp)

ii. "When God remembers his mercy, he forgets our sins." (Horne)

d. **According to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O LORD:** These are strong expressions of David's humility and even repentance. He asked to be remembered not on the basis of merit, but on the basis of **mercy**. He wanted God to do all this remembering and forgetting for the sake of God's own **goodness**, not David's supposed goodness.

i. "Never did prisoner at the bar beg more earnestly for his life than David did for pardon of his great offence, especially in the matter of Uriah; for that lay heaviest." (Trapp)

B. Declaring the goodness of God.

1. (8-11) *God's goodness to the humble.*

**Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.
For Your name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.**

a. **Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He teaches sinners:** David's observation here was not learned through simple logic. It is just as logical for God to *judge* or *destroy* sinners as it is for Him to teach them. Yet David had learned this through love more than logic, that God is **good and upright**, and this goodness can be for the benefit of sinners instead of for their destruction.

b. **The humble He guides...the humble He teaches:** David knew there was a particular *kind* of sinner that received this instruction and guidance from the good God – the **humble** man or woman. Not every sinner receives

these good things from God, but those who will humble themselves before Him do.

i. "Meek spirits are in high favour with the Father of the meek and lowly Jesus, for he sees in them the image of his only-begotten Son." (Spurgeon)

c. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies:

This is a remarkable promise. The conditions are that one stay in God's covenant and in His word (**His testimony**), both in the sense of knowing them and obeying them. The promise is that God will continually reveal His **mercy and truth** in all that we live and experience.

i. We imagine a discouraged believer who says, "God's path for me is severe and terrible, at least at the present moment." David answers from both his knowledge and experience, "**All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth**, for those who stay in His covenant and in His word. Focus yourself once again on His covenant and His testimonies, and you will see this for yourself."

ii. **Paths of the LORD:** "In the Hebrew I find the word here used is 'wheel tracks,' such ruts as wagons make when they go down our green roads in wet weather and sink in up to the axles. God's ways are at times like heavy wagon-tracks, and they cut deep into our souls; yet they are all of them mercy." (Spurgeon)

iii. "*Mercy and truth are the paths in which God constantly walks in reference to the children of men; and so frequently does he show them mercy, and so frequently does he fulfil his truth, that his paths are earnestly discerned. How frequent, how deeply indented, and how multiplied are those*

tracks to every family and individual!" (Clarke)

iv. **All the paths of the LORD:** "They say there is no rule without an exception, but there is an exception to that rule. All God's dealings with his people are gracious and faithful." (Spurgeon)

d. **For Your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my iniquity, for it is great:** Once again we see a strong expression of David's humility. He expected **pardon** for God's sake, not his own. He humbly recognized the greatness of his own **iniquity**.

i. Our sin is **great**:

- Our sin is great when we consider against whom it is committed.
- Our sin is great when we consider that it is against a just and fair law.
- Our sin is great when we consider it is committed by those made in the image of God.
- Our sin is great when we consider the amount of our sin.

ii. It is strange (but true) spiritual logic: **pardon my iniquity, for it is great**. We can only imagine a criminal in a court of law appealing to the judge on this basis. "Your honor, find me not guilty, because my crimes have been many and large."

iii. David seemed to know the freedom and peace that comes from saying, "LORD, I know that I am a great sinner; but You are an even greater Savior. I humbly submit myself to You and ask you to **pardon my iniquity**."

2. (12-14) *God's goodness to the reverent man.*

**Who is the man that fears the LORD?
Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.
He himself shall dwell in prosperity,
And his descendants shall inherit the earth.
The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him,
And He will show them His covenant.**

a. **Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach:** Using the Hebrew poetic tool of repetition, David set the idea of *humility* (Psa 25:9) next to the idea of a reverent fear of God. The two concepts are closely connected, and this humble, reverent person can expect the gift of God's guidance and instruction.

b. **He himself shall dwell in prosperity:** David described the earthly, material blessings that often come to the humble and reverent. We sense that perhaps David said this in faith; though his present situation was bad, he trusted that **prosperity** and blessing for his descendants would come in time.

c. **The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant:** After touching on the material blessings that may come to the humble and reverent man, David then spoke of the greatest blessing that one may receive – the **secret of the LORD**, and a greater understanding of **His covenant**.

i. "The Hebrew idiom for 'the LORD confides' is 'the secret of Yahweh,' which may here be translated by 'intimate circle' (cf. Job 19:19; Job 29:4; Pro 3:32). Those who do his will are his confidants, as was Abraham (Gen 18:17).\" (VanGemeren)

ii. "Some read it 'the friendship:' it signifies familiar intercourse, confidential intimacy, and select fellowship. This is a great secret. Carnal minds cannot guess what is intended by it, and even believers

cannot explain it in words, for it must be felt to be known." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Whether we translate the first word 'secret' or 'friendship,' the sense is substantially the same. Obedience and the true fear of Jehovah directly tend to discernment of His purposes, and will besides be rewarded by whispers from heaven." (Maclaren)

iv. **The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him** reminds us that there are realities of Christian knowledge and experience known only by those who have new life by the Spirit of God; *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1Co 2:14)*. To explain such secrets to those who do not have the Spirit of God is like explaining colors to a blind man or musical harmonies to a deaf man.

v. "There are secret passages of love between Christ and the believing soul, which it would not be lawful to utter. High fellowship: deep blessedness." (Meyer)

C. Eyes toward the God of help.

1. (15) *Eyes toward God, even from trouble.*

**My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.**

a. **My eyes are ever toward the LORD:** David said this both as a statement of fact and as a prayer for the future. He knew the importance of keeping the attention of his mind and soul **toward the LORD**.

i. "He looks in confidence and waits in hope. We may add to this look of faith and hope the obedient look of service, the humble look of reverence, the admiring look of wonder, the studious look of meditation and the tender look of affection." (Spurgeon)

b. **For He shall pluck my feet out of the net:** This reminds us that this psalm was written from a season of trouble, in which David still felt himself caught. His **feet** were still in the **net** his enemies set against him.

2. (16-21) *The plea for help presented again.*

**Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me,
For I *am* desolate and afflicted.
The troubles of my heart have enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses!
Look on my affliction and my pain,
And forgive all my sins.
Consider my enemies, for they are many;
And they hate me with cruel hatred.
Keep my soul, and deliver me;
Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.
Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for You.**

a. **Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me:** We see David did not hesitate to repeat his request to God, and he did so with a clever turn of thought. In Psa 25:15 he spoke of how he had turned his attention toward the LORD; here he asked God to **turn** His attention toward His needy servant.

b. **Desolate and afflicted...troubles...distresses...affliction...pain:**

This sweet, comforting psalm came from a season of agony for David. Much of the agony came from **enemies**, for **many** were set against him.

i. Some thousand years before Paul, David lived what the Apostle would later write at 2Co 4:8-10 : *We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord*

Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

c. **And forgive all my sins:** It was as if David recognized, "I have many enemies and troubles, but none greater than my own **sins**. Please God, deal also with **all my sins**."

d. **I put my trust in You...I wait for You:** The present difficulty David endured would not prevent him from trusting and serving God. This was a deep relationship with God, not one easily damaged or separated by disappointment.

3. (22) *A closing request.*

**Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all their troubles!**

a. **Redeem Israel, O God:** We don't know if this psalm came from the time *before* David was king, or after. Whether it was before or after, David had a deep concern for the blessing and welfare of God's people as a whole, not merely himself.

i. "If thou wilt not pity and help me, yet spare thy people, who suffer for my sake, and in my sufferings."
(Poole)

b. **Out of all their troubles:** It is remarkable that David could spare a care and a prayer for the **troubles** of others when he was in a season of such difficulty. This shows a life that was indeed instructed in God's ways, even as David prayed (Psa 25:8-14).

i. One of the worst aspects of difficulty and trial in the life of the believer is that it can lead one to become terribly self-focused and concerned only with one's own problems. David, in his humility and reverence to God, was guided in a better way.

I Will Bless the Lord

Psa 26:1 Declare me innocent, O LORD, because I do what is right and trust you completely.

Psa 26:2 Examine me and test me, LORD; judge my desires and thoughts.

Psa 26:3 Your constant love is my guide; your faithfulness always leads me.

Psa 26:4 I do not keep company with worthless people; I have nothing to do with hypocrites.

Psa 26:5 I hate the company of the evil and avoid the wicked.

Psa 26:6 LORD, I wash my hands to show that I am innocent and march in worship around your altar.

Psa 26:7 I sing a hymn of thanksgiving and tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Psa 26:8 I love the house where you live, O LORD, the place where your glory dwells.

Psa 26:9 Do not destroy me with the sinners; spare me from the fate of murderers—

Psa 26:10 those who do evil all the time and are always ready to take bribes.

Psa 26:11 As for me, I do what is right; be merciful to me and save me!

Psa 26:12 I am safe from all dangers; in the assembly of his people I praise the LORD.

Psalms 26:1-12

Psalms 26 – Standing in an Even Place

*Psalms 26 is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. Attempts to place it at a specific time in David's life are unsure. It shares themes with many psalms, but we note that despite the danger of evil associates, David remained confident that he would not slip, and that he would securely stand in an even place.*

A. Innocence proclaimed.

1. (1-3) *A plea for vindication and the reason for it.*

**Vindicate me, O LORD,
For I have walked in my integrity.
I have also trusted in the LORD;
I shall not slip.
Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my mind and my heart.
For Your lovingkindness *is* before my eyes,
And I have walked in Your truth.**

a. **Vindicate me, O LORD:** Like many of David's psalms, this song was written from a time of great trouble. He here pleaded for God to **vindicate** him, presumably by his enemies. The request carries with it the implication that David himself was unable to vindicate himself or had chosen not to.

i. "It is not David's reputation in the eyes of other people that concerns him but rather God's reputation that he covets." (Boice)

b. **For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the LORD; I shall not slip:** David had confidence that God would answer his prayer and **vindicate** him, because he had faith in God (**trusted in the LORD**) which he demonstrated by a faithful life (**I have walked in my integrity**). Therefore, despite his present difficulty, he could say, "**I shall not slip.**"

c. **Examine me, O LORD, and prove me:** David was confident enough in his demonstrated life of faith that he asked God to **examine** and **try** him. If David were not in fact trusting in God or walking rightly, he wanted God to show him and teach him.

i. The request to **examine**, **prove**, and **try** refers mainly to the *inward* working of a man or woman –

the **mind** and the **heart**.

d. **For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth:** David here again combined the ideas of trusting in God and His mercy (God's **lovingkindness**), and in his demonstrated life of faith (**I have walked in Your truth**).

i. **Your lovingkindness is before my eyes:** David knew the value of sustained examination and meditation upon the **lovingkindness** of God. "Brethren, depend upon it that you shall find, each of you when you get dull and flagging in the practical part of your religion, that the proper way to revive it is to think more than you have done upon the lovingkindness of God." (Spurgeon)

- His lovingkindness is a good subject.
- His lovingkindness is a wide subject.
- His lovingkindness is a pleasing subject.
- His lovingkindness is a plain and simple subject.
- His lovingkindness is an always suitable and seasonable subject.
- His lovingkindness begins in eternity.
- His lovingkindness is given freely.
- His lovingkindness is certain.
- His lovingkindness is faithful.
- His lovingkindness goes into the smallest details.

e. **And I have walked in Your truth:** The idea of **walked** speaks of action, of manner of living. David knew the importance of both a right *inward* life (**mind** and **heart**) and right *actions* and deeds.

i. "We need people who have been taught and who then also walk in that way so that they demonstrate to unbelievers that the path of faith and morality is the happy and successful way to live." (Boice)

ii. "If our actions are evil, it is vain to take comfort from our thoughts. If actions speak louder than words, they may well speak louder than thoughts." (Spurgeon)

2. (4-8) *Innocence proclaimed.*

**I have not sat with idolatrous mortals,
Nor will I go in with hypocrites.
I have hated the assembly of evildoers,
And will not sit with the wicked.
I will wash my hands in innocence;
So I will go about Your altar, O LORD,
That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all Your wondrous works.
LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house,
And the place where Your glory dwells.**

a. **I have not sat with idolatrous mortals:** Having stated the fact of his faithful life to God, David then described several specific ways that his life demonstrated a living faith. He did not associate with idolaters, **hypocrites, evildoers**, or the **wicked**.

i. "*I have not sat*, i.e. chosen or used to converse with them; for *sitting* is a posture of ease and continuance." (Poole)

ii. David described idol worshippers as **mortals** because it was helpful for him to remember and for them to know that their lives were short, and they would soon enough have to answer to the *true* and living God, instead of idols of their own making.

iii. David did this under the assumption that at least some kind of association with these people was morally wrong. One might say that he took 1Co 15:33 to heart a thousand years before Paul wrote the words by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *Evil company corrupts good habits*.

iv. **Hypocrites:** "The *hidden ones*, the *dark designers*, the *secret plotters*." (Clarke)

b. **And will not sit with the wicked:** David had in mind the people he chose to associate with. We have little or no control over many contacts and associations in life; but of those we do, we are obligated to choose and value our associations with a heavenly perspective, not an earthly one.

i. In the modern world this idea takes on an entirely different dimension, in many ways unknown to King David. We choose associations in our entertainment, and we often choose very poorly. We allow the wicked to amuse us, then to be our examples, then our models, and finally our idols. David's statement here also applies to these kind of contacts and associations.

ii. "Many Christians can trace a lost youth or fruitless middle years to the bad influence of evil persons, whom they looked up to and even envied at one time." (Boice)

iii. "Many people have a very strong desire to meet celebrated or 'important' people, including those whom they disapprove.... But I am inclined to think a Christian would be wise to avoid, where he decently can, any meeting with people who are bullies, or lascivious, cruel, dishonest, spiteful and so forth. Not because we are 'too good' for them. In a sense we are not good enough. We are not good enough to cope with all the temptations, nor clever enough to

cope with all the problems, which an evening spent in such society produces.” (C.S. Lewis, cited in Boice)

c. **I will wash my hands in innocence; so will I go about Your altar, O LORD:** David did not believe he was sinless or perfect. He did need to **wash** his hands, but he could do so in the **innocence** of a clear conscience before God. He availed himself of God’s **altar**, both for atonement and for offerings of **thanksgiving**.

i. Probably people wash or cleanse their hands more today than ever before in history. Perhaps every time we do, we should remind ourselves to *receive* the cleansing that comes from Jesus and His work on the cross, and our *responsibility* to cleanse our hands from wicked actions, our mouth from wicked words, and our heart from wicked desires. Outward cleanliness is good, but worth little for eternity if our life and heart are filthy before God.

ii. **So will I go about Your altar:** To the best of our knowledge, there was no ritual practice of walking around or dancing around God’s **altar** among the ancient Hebrews. It may be that David had in mind the spiritual sacrifices of praise, and he joined a happy circle of worshippers (as Maclaren thought). Or, if David meant literal sacrifice, he probably had in mind the idea of offering so many animals to God at one time that the sacrifices themselves circled the altar in a sense. “He implies that he would offer many sacrifices together, which would employ the priests about the altar.” (Poole)

d. **I have loved the habitation of Your house:** For David, a right walk with God was more than the avoidance of evil. It was also a simple yet deep love for God and His presence. He loved the tabernacle because

it represented the **house** of God; it was the **place** of God's **glory**.

i. Obedience cannot be sustained without the sweetness of God's presence and glory.

ii. "The *habitation* must mean the *holy of holies*, where the Divine Presence was manifest; and the *place of the tabernacle* must refer to the *mercy-seat*, or the place where the *glory of the Lord* appeared between the cherubim, upon the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant." (Clarke)

B. What David wants from God.

1. (9-10) *What David does not want God to do.*

**Do not gather my soul with sinners,
Nor my life with bloodthirsty men,
In whose hands is a sinister scheme,
And whose right hand is full of bribes.**

a. **Do not gather my soul with sinners:** In light of David's great need and his great trust in God, he asked God to *preserve his life*. He refused to associate with the wicked in life; he asked God to keep him from **sinners** in death.

i. "The worst and most abandoned wretch on earth agrees with David in this. Sinners do not wish to be gathered with sinners. Balaam's prayer is, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' which only differs in words from David's petition, 'Gather not my soul with sinners.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **In whose hands is a sinister scheme:** David knew of many wicked men with evil plots who were **full** of greedy **bribes**; he considered it a curse to be associated with them either in the present age or in death.

i. Many who would never think of taking **bribes** from a businessman still take bribes of a sort; they take bribes from sin. A bribe simply is a reward for doing something morally wrong. Sin may bribe us with momentary pleasure, attention, fame of a sort, excitement, comfort of life, or whatever. We should never be willing to do something morally wrong because it is rewarded in some way.

ii. "A soul walking in its integrity will take bribes neither from men, nor sin itself." (William Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (11-12) What David wants God to do.

**But as for me, I will walk in my integrity;
Redeem me and be merciful to me.
My foot stands in an even place;
In the congregations I will bless the LORD.**

a. **But as for me, I will walk in my integrity:** We note David's confident proclamation. Despite the danger to his life, despite the presence of the wicked, he – God helping him – would

walk in his **integrity**.

b. **Redeem me and be merciful to me:** David had appropriate resolve, but even more appropriate trust in God. He could only **walk** in **integrity** if God would **redeem** him and **be merciful** to him.

c. **My foot stands in an even place:** With this combination of appropriate resolve and trust in God, David – despite the dangers all around – could be confident of his position (**my foot stands**). He stood on level ground, **in an even place** – a repeat of his confidence in the first verse, *I shall not slip*.

i. "He seems to say to them all, 'Hoot at me if you will: seek to trip me up as you please: God is high

above you all, and in him I shall still stand my ground, for, blessed be his name, notwithstanding every attempt of the enemy to throw me down, my foot standeth in an even place, and in the congregation will I bless the Lord.” (Spurgeon)

d. **In the congregations I will bless the LORD:** He was so confident that he said that he would **bless** and praise God publicly, among others (**in the congregations**), not as an outcast or castaway.

i. “The song began in the minor, but it has now reached the major key. Saints often sing themselves into happiness. The *even place* upon which our foot stands is the sure, covenant faithfulness, eternal promise and immutable oath of the Lord of Hosts; there is no fear of falling from this solid basis, or of its being removed from under us.” (Spurgeon)

The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation

Psa 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; I will fear no one. The LORD protects me from all danger; I will never be afraid.

Psa 27:2 When evil people attack me and try to kill me, they stumble and fall.

Psa 27:3 Even if a whole army surrounds me, I will not be afraid; even if enemies attack me, I will still trust God.

Psa 27:4 I have asked the LORD for one thing; one thing only do I want: to live in the LORD's house all my life, to marvel there at his goodness, and to ask for his guidance.

Psa 27:5 In times of trouble he will shelter me; he will keep me safe in his Temple and make me secure on a high rock.

Psa 27:6 So I will triumph over my enemies around me. With shouts of joy I will offer sacrifices in his Temple; I will sing, I will praise the LORD.

Psa 27:7 Hear me, LORD, when I call to you! Be merciful and answer me!

Psa 27:8 When you said, "Come worship me," I answered, "I will come, LORD."

Psa 27:9 Don't hide yourself from me! Don't be angry with me; don't turn your servant away. You have been my help; don't leave me, don't abandon me, O God, my savior.

Psa 27:10 My father and mother may abandon me, but the LORD will take care of me.

Psa 27:11 Teach me, LORD, what you want me to do, and lead me along a safe path, because I have many enemies.

Psa 27:12 Don't abandon me to my enemies, who attack me with lies and threats.

Psa 27:13 I know that I will live to see the LORD's goodness in this present life.

Psa 27:14 Trust in the LORD. Have faith, do not despair. Trust in the LORD.

Psalms 27:1-14

Psalms 27 – The Seeking, Waiting Life Rewarded

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. As with many of David's psalms, it is impossible to confidently state which period of his life it comes from. It speaks of trouble from enemies, adversaries, false witnesses, and violent men, but this was true of many periods of King David's life. There is such a marked change between the first half and the second half of this psalm that many suggest that it was two different psalms stitched together. Alexander Maclaren said this idea "has much in its favour"; but it neglects how the experience of the man or woman of God can change so much even within a day or a song.*

A. David's confidence in and desire for God.

1. (1-3) A proven confidence.

**The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked came against me
To eat up my flesh,
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.
Though an army may encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me,
In this I *will be* confident.**

a. **The LORD is my light and my salvation:** Like many psalms, King David wrote this from a season of trouble. Yet it is a song of confidence and triumph: because David was not in *darkness* or *ultimate peril* because **the LORD** was his **light** and **salvation**.

i. God Himself brought **light** to David's life. He did not despair in darkness and all that it represented. His life was filled with the LORD, and his life was filled with **light**.

ii. God Himself brought **salvation** to David. He probably meant this as rescue both in the immediate and the ultimate senses. God had rescued him time and again, and would do so into eternity. "The Hebrew word for salvation means 'deliverance' explicitly, and again this probably has to do with deliverance from the king's immediate enemies." (Boice)

iii. "Although God is often associated with light in the Bible, this verse is the only direct application of the name *light* to God in the Old Testament." (Boice)
Joh 1:5; Joh 1:9 say this specifically of Jesus.

iv. **Light** and **salvation** were also wonderfully promised to the Gentiles through the person and work of the Messiah (Isa 49:6; repeated in Act 13:47).

b. **The LORD is the strength of my life:** David was a skilled, experienced warrior and must have been a man of impressive physical strength. Nevertheless, he looked to the LORD as the **strength** of his **life**. David knew something of what the Apostle Paul would write many years later: *Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (Eph 6:10).

i. "The very names of Jehovah as 'Light,' 'Salvation,' 'the Stronghold of my life,' imply darkness, danger, and besetting foes." (Maclaren)

ii. If we rarely know what it is to have God be the **strength** of our life, perhaps it is because we trust in so many other things for strength. We find it easy to trust in our wisdom, our experience, our friends, and our resources. David knew a strength greater than all of those.

c. **Whom shall I fear?...Of whom shall I be afraid?** David used the poetic tool of repetition to make his point and bring together parallel ideas. Because God was his **light**, his **salvation**, and his **strength**, there was really no reason to **fear** or **be afraid**.

d. **When the wicked came against me...they stumbled and fell:** David remembered how God had proven Himself reliable in the past. There were times when **the wicked** or even **an army** came against him, yet God still showed that He was David's **light**, his **salvation**, and his **strength**.

i. David's confidence in God was battle-tested. He did not have fair-weather faith that lived in always-easy

circumstances. This isn't the joy of a man in a comfortable monastery; this is the song of a man who knew God's goodness even in danger and despair.

ii. 1Sa 17:44 relates that Goliath told the young David, *Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!* Perhaps David remembered that when he wrote, **When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.**

iii. **They stumbled and fell:** "God's breath blew them off their legs.... This was literally true in the case of our Lord in Gethsemane, when those who came to take him went backward and fell to the ground; and herein he was a prophetic representative of all wrestling believers who, rising from their knees shall, by the power of faith, throw their foes upon their faces." (Spurgeon)

v. **In this will I be confident:** "Because of his confidence in the Lord, the psalmist is not afraid. In his inner being there is no fear. This confident confession in God's saving love is similar to Paul's confession in Rom 8:31-39." (VanGemeren)

2. (4) *David's desire for God's presence.*

**One *thing* I have desired of the LORD,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to inquire in His temple.**

a. **One thing I have desired of the LORD:** The tone of the song suddenly changes from celebration to contemplation. The experience of the goodness and

greatness of God made David think about how wonderful it is to seek Him and to experience His presence.

i. "One purpose dominated his prayer and life. It was never long absent from the Psalmist's thought. The men of one idea are irresistible." (Meyer)

b. That I may dwell in the house of the LORD: David wished he could live in the tabernacle itself, surrounded every day by the presence and beauty of God.

i. In these few verses we note the many ways David referred to the **house of the LORD**. "David seems to be ransacking the Hebrew language for nouns to describe it: 'the house of the Lord' (v. 4) 'his temple' (v. 4), 'his dwelling' (v. 5), 'his tabernacle' (vv.5-6)." (Boice)

c. To behold the beauty of the LORD: David knew there was **beauty** in the nature and presence of God, beauty that could be perceived by the seeking eye of faith. He could think of no greater occupation than to fill his mind and heart with the goodness and greatness of God.

i. There is richness in God, revealed to the seeking heart, that many people never know. It is a shame that David knew this under the Old Covenant, and so many of us – with a greater covenant and greater promises – never know it.

ii. "The character of God is attractive, and fitted to inspire us with love for him, and to make us, as it were, run after him." (Gray, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. Alexander Pope, a famous writer, once wrote: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man." He thought it was more important for us to learn about ourselves than about God.

iv. An even more famous writer, Charles Spurgeon, responded to Pope's statement: "It has been said by someone that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father." (This came from Spurgeon's first published sermon, titled *The Immutability of God*, delivered on January 7, 1855 – when he was 20 years old.)

d. **And to inquire in His temple:** In God's presence, David wished to go from contemplation to inquiry. He wanted to know more of God and more of His ways.

i. It wasn't that the earthly structure so fascinated David; he wrote this when the tabernacle tent served as a rather humble **temple** for Israel, before the wonderful building that Solomon built. "It was not the earthly temple itself that charmed David but rather the beauty of the Lord that was to be found at the temple in a special way." (Boice)

ii. "The two acts complete the joyful employment of a soul communing with God: first perceiving and then reflecting upon His uncreated beauty of goodness." (Maclaren)

3. (5-6) *The blessings of God's presence.*

**For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.**

And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me;

Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

a. **For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion:** David knew that there was special blessing and protection for the one who earnestly sought God. It wasn't a promise to prevent all trouble, but to give security and blessing even in the midst of it.

i. "God's dwelling is a 'tent,' where He will shelter His guests. The privilege of asylum is theirs." (Maclaren)

b. **He shall set me high upon a rock:** David believed that a life spent seeking God would know a measure of safety and security, even in the presence of **enemies all around.**

i. **My head shall be lifted up:** "Two things make the head hang down – fear and shame; hope easeth the Christian's heart of both these, and so forbids him to give any sign of a desponding mind by a dejected countenance." (Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy:** David's life was filled with celebration and gratitude for all God had done. He would **sing praises to the LORD** who blessed him with His presence and rescued him so often.

i. "*Sacrifices of joy, or of shouting and resounding, i.e. of thanksgiving; which were accomplished with the sound of trumpets and other instruments, Num 10:10; 1Ch 16:41-42; Psa 33:3.*" (Poole)

B. A prayer.

1. (7-10) Seeking the faithful God.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice!
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
When You said, "Seek My face,"
My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."
Do not hide Your face from me;
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not leave me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation.
When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the LORD will take care of me.

a. **Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice:** The celebration of the first half of this psalm might make us think that it was all easy for David. One might think that when trouble came there was no struggle, either with self or God. Yet David showed us that even he – the one who sought God with such passion – sometimes felt that God did not hear him immediately.

i. "Note his anxiety to be heard. Pharisees care not a fig for the Lord's hearing them, so long as they are heard of men, or charm their own pride with their sounding devotions; but with a genuine man, the Lord's ear is everything." (Spurgeon)

b. **When You said, "Seek My face":** God invited David to seek Him; yet there was a sense in which David felt that God was *hiding* from him (**Do not hide Your face from me**). David didn't become angry with God or turn against Him; in his disappointment he sought God all the more diligently and desperately (**Do not leave me nor forsake me**).

c. **You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me:** David used God's *past help* as a reason to ask and expect *future* help.

d. **When my father and mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me:** David knew that the love and care of God could go beyond even the closest human bonds. David probably did not expect his parents to **forsake** him; yet even if they did, God would not.

i. David sent his parents to Moab for protection in 1Sa 22:3-4. Perhaps, without their ever intending it, this made David feel forsaken by his parents.

ii. Boice points out that from a parent, we want acceptance, to be heard, guidance, and protection. God can fulfill each of these for all, including someone who never received these from a parent.

2. (11-13) *A believing prayer for guidance.*

**Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.**

**Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.**

***I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.***

a. **Teach me Your way, O LORD:** This was a simple prayer for a life of true discipleship. David didn't want to live *his* way, but the LORD's **way**.

b. **And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies:** David didn't ask for an *easy* path, but instead a *level* or *even* place, a place of secure standing. It's the same word used in Psa 26:12 to describe *an even place*.

i. "The simplest meaning of the word rendered *plain* [**smooth**], is level, or even." (Morgan)

ii. David had many **adversaries, false witnesses** against him, and violent men opposing him. In asking

for a **smooth path**, he wasn't asking for an easy life but for a stable and secure place to stand against the storms of this life.

iii. **My enemies**: "The word *enemies* is rendered by Thirtle 'watchful foes,' and that exactly conveys the idea. It is that of enemies lying in ambush, waiting to catch him unawares, to attack him treacherously. The plain path for which he asks is one, traveling along which there shall be no pitfalls or lurking places for these foes." (Morgan)

c. **I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living**: David's seeking after God, and his knowledge of the Lord, led him to this triumphant statement. He would have given up (**lost heart**), but he knew that the good God would find a way to show His goodness in this life (as well as the next).

i. Some speculate that David meant *the life to come* when he wrote of **the land of the living**. One can fairly say that this is the land of the dying, "in which there are more dead than living, more under ground than above it; where the earth is fuller of graves than houses; where life lies trembling under the hand of death; and where death hath power to tyrannise over life! No, my soul, *there only* is the *land of the living* where there are none but the living; where there is a church, not militant, but triumphant; a church indeed, but no church-yard, because none dead, nor none that can die; where life is not passive, nor death active; where life sits crowned, and where death is swallowed up in victory." (Baxter, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (14) *An encouragement to others.*

Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,

**And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD!**

a. **Wait on the LORD; be of good courage:** Here King David spoke to you and to me, to his readers. From the reservoir of his experience he can encourage us to seek after God (**Wait on the LORD**) and to take courage in Him (**be of good courage**).

i. "Wait at his door with prayer; wait at his foot with humility; wait at his table with service; wait at his window with expectancy." (Spurgeon)

ii. "To wait for Jehovah is ever to find the plain path, however rough that path may be." (Morgan)

b. **And He shall strengthen your heart:** This profound promise is *for us*. Across the centuries David spoke to us, telling us to be confident that there is strength in the LORD for those who seek Him and trust Him.

c. **Wait, I say, on the LORD:** As in Isa 40:31, the idea behind **wait...on the LORD** is not a passive sitting around until the LORD does something. Yes, God gives us strength; but we don't expect it to come as if He were pouring it into us as we sit passively. He brings it to us as we seek Him, and rely on Him, instead of relying on our own strength. If we are weak, it is because we do not **wait...on the LORD**.

i. We should wait **on the LORD**:

- As a beggar waits for handouts at the rich man's door.
- As a student waits to be taught.
- As a servant waits on his master.
- As a traveler waits for the directions of the guide.
- As a child waits upon his parent.

- ii. "Many of his promises bear a long date; but they are sure and infallible. Wait, therefore." (Trapp)

The Lord Is My Strength and My Shield

Psa 28:1 O LORD, my defender, I call to you. Listen to my cry! If you do not answer me, I will be among those who go down to the world of the dead.

Psa 28:2 Hear me when I cry to you for help, when I lift my hands toward your holy Temple.

Psa 28:3 Do not condemn me with the wicked, with those who do evil—those whose words are friendly, but who have hatred in their hearts.

Psa 28:4 Punish them for what they have done, for the evil they have committed. Punish them for all their deeds; give them what they deserve!

Psa 28:5 They take no notice of what the LORD has done or of what he has made; so he will punish them and destroy them forever.

Psa 28:6 Give praise to the LORD; he has heard my cry for help.

Psa 28:7 The LORD protects and defends me; I trust in him. He gives me help and makes me glad; I praise him with joyful songs.

Psa 28:8 The LORD protects his people; he defends and saves his chosen king.

Psa 28:9 Save your people, LORD, and bless those who are yours. Be their shepherd, and take care of them forever.

Psalms 28:1-9

Psalms 28 – Praise from Prayer Heard and Answered

This psalm is again simply titled "A Psalm of David." It shows David the son of Jesse once again crying out to God, and praising Him for the hearing and answering of his prayer. In this psalm we see the heart in a few different

aspects: the evil heart (Psa 28:3), the trusting heart (Psa 28:7), and the rejoicing heart (Psa 28:7).

A. The prayer of petition, making requests of God.

1. (1-2) Asking to be heard by God.

To You I will cry, O LORD my Rock:

Do not be silent to me,

Lest, if You *are* silent to me,

I become like those who go down to the pit.

Hear the voice of my supplications

When I cry to You,

When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.

a. **To You will I cry, O LORD my Rock: do not be silent to me:** With this opening to the psalm, David was both trusting and hopeful. In faith he gave God the title he longed for Him to fulfill: to be David's **Rock** in the present season of difficulty. David said this also in hope, because at the moment he felt God to be **silent** to him.

i. David said that the **LORD** was his **Rock** – his foundation, his stability, his security. "It is a remarkable fact that in all the Old Testament literature, 'rock' is reserved as a figure of Deity...never for man." (Morgan)

b. **Lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit:** In his trouble, David felt the grave was near – and if God did not intervene he would not live long. The response and intervention of God (opposite of being **silent**) was what David needed and longed for.

i. "The situation is probably illness or deep despair, and the fear is not a dread of death as such, but of death with unmerited disgrace." (Kidner)

ii. To avoid this disgrace, David needed God to hear him, to no longer be **silent**. "Jehovah seems deaf

when prayer is unanswered, and is silent when He does not speak in deliverance" (Maclaren).

iii. "Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants cannot; they are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will – they must go further and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest." (Spurgeon)

c. **When I cry to You, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary:** David used the poetic techniques of repetition and parallelism to say essentially the same thing in two ways. His prayer was a cry to God, and his body was set in the traditional posture of prayer (**I lift up my hands**).

i. "An ordinary gesture in prayer, expressing faith (for they held out their open hands, as craving beggars)." (Trapp)

ii. Some (like Clarke and others) believe the line **Your holy sanctuary** proves that David did not write this psalm, and that it was actually composed at a later time when the temple stood. This is not necessary, because the tabernacle (which was certainly present in King David's day) was also a **holy sanctuary**.

iii. "This need not mean that the psalm is later than David; only that the word had become the standard term for the ark's abode by Solomon's time, which suggests that it was in use well before this." (Kidner)

2. (3-5) *Asking to be spared the fate of the wicked.*

**Do not take me away with the wicked
And with the workers of iniquity,
Who speak peace to their neighbors,
But evil *is* in their hearts.
Give them according to their deeds,**

**And according to the wickedness of their endeavors;
Give them according to the work of their hands;
Render to them what they deserve.
Because they do not regard the works of the LORD,
Nor the operation of His hands,
He shall destroy them
And not build them up.**

a. **Do not take me away with the wicked:** David happily knew that his life was different than **the workers of iniquity**, and he asked that God would treat him differently than the **wicked**.

i. "Even worse than consignment to the will of the wicked, which was the fear of Psa 27:12, is consignment *with* them to the disgrace they have earned." (Kidner)

b. **Who speak peace to their neighbors, but evil is in their hearts:** When David thought to describe the wicked, he began noting that they were false in their words, hiding the **evil** in **their hearts**.

i. "Soft words, oily with pretended love, are the deceitful meshes of the infernal net in which Satan catches the precious life; many of his children are learned in his abominable craft, and fish with their father's nets, almost as cunningly as he himself could do it." (Spurgeon)

c. **Give them according to their deeds:** In his own seasons of sin, David cast himself upon the mercy of God and asked to be forgiven for his sinful deeds. Here, he prayed for a harsh judgment to be applied to the wicked, that God would deal with them according to their wicked **deeds**.

i. To emphasize the point, David repeated the same idea in four different phrases:

- **According to their deeds.**
- **The wickedness of their endeavors.**
- **The work of their hands.**
- **What they deserve.**

ii. "These verses are not simply vindictive, but put into words the protest of any healthy conscience at the wrongs of the present order, and the conviction that a day of judgment is a moral necessity." (Kidner)

d. **Because they do not regard the works of the LORD, nor the operation of His hands:** When David considered the wicked deeds of the ungodly, he also considered that they ignored the creative work of God. To David, this was evidence of one being sinful and ripe for judgment.

i. Paul expressed the same idea in Rom 1:20-21 : *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

ii. "The acts of the Lord in creation, redemption, and Yahweh's rule through David reveal the wonder of God's purpose. The history of redemption condemns the wicked." (VanGemeren)

e. **He shall destroy them and not build them up:** The wicked forget about God, but He does not forget about them. God promises to give those who reject Him what they deserve.

B. The prayer of praise, happy in the answer to prayer.

1. (6-7) *Praising the LORD who hears prayer.*

**Blessed be the LORD,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!
The LORD is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I will praise Him.**

a. **Blessed be the LORD, because He has heard:** In his trouble, David cried out to God. Now he praises the God who heard and answered his prayer, becoming David's **strength** and **shield**.

i. "Suddenly the prayer becomes a song of praise, an act of adoration." (Morgan)

ii. This praise was founded on a reason, indicated by the word **because**. "Real praise is established upon sufficient and constraining reasons; it is not irrational emotion, but rises, like a pure spring, from the deeps of experience." (Spurgeon)

iii. It's a beautiful thing to say, "**my strength**" and "**my shield**." Some have a theoretical knowledge of God as a strength or shield, without knowing the goodness of it in their individual lives.

iv. "My dear friend, if you can say, 'The Lord is my strength,' you can bear anything and everything. You could bear a martyr's death if the Lord should be your strength. He could make a stalk of wheat to bear up the whole world if he strengthened it." (Spurgeon)

b. **My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped:** David here adds his voice to the testimony of countless others who have found help as their **heart trusted** in God. This brought great rejoicing and singing to David.

i. David *knew* that God answered his prayer, perhaps even before the answer was in hand. "It is a modern

refinement in theology which teaches that no man *can know* when God hears and answers his prayers.... True religion knows nothing of these abominations; it teaches its votaries to pray to God, to expect an answer from him, and to look for the Holy Spirit to bear witness with their spirits that they are the sons and daughters of God." (Clarke)

2. (8-9) *Praising the LORD who is the strength of His people.*

**The LORD is their strength,
And He *is* the saving refuge of His anointed.
Save Your people,
And bless Your inheritance;
Shepherd them also,
And bear them up forever.**

a. **The LORD is their strength, and He is the saving refuge of His anointed:** This is the blessing given to the heart that trusts God; God *becomes* their strength. He doesn't merely *give* strength; He **is their strength**, and the **refuge of His anointed**.

i. The word **anointed** (*mashiach*) reminds us of the ultimate Anointed One, Jesus the Messiah. **His anointed** ones are secure in the Messiah, and therefore strong and safe.

b. **Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance; shepherd them also, and bear them up forever:** David concludes this psalm with a series of short prayers asking God to bring His people what they need and long for.

i. The psalm started with a plea for *personal* help and rescue, but by the end of the psalm, David's concern is for the LORD's **people** as a whole. "Whatever is dear to the loved one is dear to the lover. You cannot

love the pastor without taking a keen interest in all that interests him, and especially in the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand. Hence when you are nearest the Lord, you are almost certain to begin pleading for his inheritance, and saying: 'Save thy people; bless them, feed them, and lift them up forever.'" (Meyer)

- **Save:** God's people need to be rescued and they look to God for it.

- **Bless:** God's people need His blessing and favor, and they receive it by being His **inheritance**.

- **Shepherd:** God's people need His care and guidance as a shepherd guides his flock. "*Raah* [**shepherd**] signifies both to *feed* and to *govern*. *Feed them, as a shepherd does his flock; rule them, as a father does his children.*" (Clarke)

- **Bear them up:** God's people need God's constant, sustaining presence – and they need it

forever.

ii."Jesus does not simply lead us to green pastures and still waters...He bears us up, and He does so for ever. Never tiring, though He imparts infinite rest; never ceasing for a moment his shepherd-care." (Meyer)

Ascribe to the Lord Glory

Psa 29:1 Praise the LORD, you heavenly beings; praise his glory and power.

Psa 29:2 Praise the LORD's glorious name; bow down before the Holy One when he appears.

Psa 29:3 The voice of the LORD is heard on the seas; the glorious God thunders, and his voice echoes over the ocean.

Psa 29:4 The voice of the LORD is heard in all its might and majesty.

Psa 29:5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars, even the cedars of Lebanon.

Psa 29:6 He makes the mountains of Lebanon jump like calves and makes Mount Hermon leap like a young bull.

Psa 29:7 The voice of the LORD makes the lightning flash.

Psa 29:8 His voice makes the desert shake; he shakes the desert of Kadesh.

Psa 29:9 The LORD's voice shakes the oaks and strips the leaves from the trees while everyone in his Temple shouts, "Glory to God!"

Psa 29:10 The LORD rules over the deep waters; he rules as king forever.

Psa 29:11 The LORD gives strength to his people and blesses them with peace.

Psalms 29:1-11

Psalms 29 – The Voice of the LORD in the Storm

*This wonderful song is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. In poetic beauty it describes the strength of a storm and understands it as the voice and power God. In so doing it repeats the name of the LORD eighteen times and uses the phrase "the voice of the LORD" seven times. "This psalm has no other elements. It is pure praise. It does not call upon us to do anything because the psalm itself is doing the only thing it is concerned about. It is praising God." (James Montgomery Boice)*

A. The command to worship the LORD.

1. (1) A word to the mighty ones.

**Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.**

a. **Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones:** David speaks to the **mightyones** of this earth, and warns them to look away from themselves and unto the LORD God of Israel. Though they may consider themselves to be **mighty ones**, and be so considered by others, they still should recognize their obligation to the LORD God.

i. This psalm is notable in its emphasis on the name, **"The LORD"** (Yahweh), using it some 18 times in these 11 verses. This is the name taken by the covenant God of Israel, rendered by the Jews with the replacement word *LORD* out of reverence to the holy name.

ii. As God says in Isa 42:8 : *I am the LORD, that is My name*. It is perhaps best to think of Yahweh as representing the Triune God. We may say it this way:

There is one God, Creator of all and the covenant God of Israel – His name is Yahweh. There are three persons who claim to be Yahweh: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In some way, therefore, there is One God in Three Persons.

iii. "This is the famous tetragrammaton, or name of four letters, which we write *Jehovah, Yehovah, Yehveh, Yeveh, Jhuh, Javah*, etc. The letters are Y H V H. The Jews never pronounce it, and the true pronunciation is utterly unknown." (Clarke, commentary on Isaiah)

iv. Some take these **mighty ones** to be those regarded as great on the earth; others take them as angelic beings. "The phrase is used elsewhere to denote 'heavenly beings' or angels (cf. Gen 6:2; Gen 6:4; Job 1:6; Job 2:1; Job 38:7; Psa 82:6; Psa 89:6). In this context the phrase may be used as a technical term for the divine assembly of heavenly

beings who surround the throne of God.”
(VanGemeeren)

b. **Give unto the LORD glory and strength:** David called upon these **mighty ones** of the earth to recognize that the LORD has a **glory and strength** that far exceeds their own.

i. When they **give unto the LORD** these things, they are not giving or attributing things to Him that He did not have before. They are recognizing things as they really are, because God is full of **glory and strength**.

ii. “Neither men nor angels can confer anything upon Jehovah, but they should recognise his glory and might, and ascribe it to him in their songs and in their hearts.” (Spurgeon)

2. (2) *A call to worship the worthy God.*

**Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**

a. **Give unto the LORD the glory due His name:** His **name** being Yahweh, this is a call to recognize the character and nature of the covenant God of Israel. God’s **name** is **due** a lot of **glory**; therefore it is right to call men (even the *mighty ones*) to worship Him.

i. **Give:** This is the third time this word is used in three lines. “Give, give, give. This showeth how unwilling such are usually to give God his right, or to suffer a word of exhortation to this purpose.” (Trapp)

b. **Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness:** The idea is that man should bow in humble recognition of the greatness, the **beauty**, and the surpassing **holiness** of God.

i. “The appeal describes the praising of God as consisting of two things: *ascribing* glory to him, that

is, acknowledging his supreme worth with our minds, and *worshipping* or bowing down to him (the Hebrew word means 'to bow down'), which means a subordination of our wills and minds to him." (Boice)

c. **In the beauty of holiness: Beauty and holiness** are not often connected ideas in our popular culture. Yet in reality, there is surpassing allure and attractiveness in true holiness. If a purported type of holiness has little beauty, it may be questioned whether it is true holiness.

i. There are four Biblical passages presenting the idea of the beauty of holiness (1Ch 16:29, 2Ch 20:21, Psa 29:2, and Psa 96:9), and each of them associates worship or praise with the concept. Perceiving the **beauty of holiness** should compel us to true **worship** and praise.

ii. God's holiness – His "set-apart-ness" – has a wonderful and distinct **beauty** about it. It is *beautiful* that God is God and not man; He is more than the greatest man or a superman. His holy love, grace, justice, and majesty are *beautiful*.

B. The awesome voice of the LORD.

1. (3-4) *The voice of the LORD over the waters.*

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;

The God of glory thunders;

The LORD is over many waters.

The voice of the LORD is powerful;

The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

a. **The voice of the LORD is over the waters:** The *mighty ones* mentioned in the first verse of this psalm may have a high regard for their own power, but their power is nothing compared to the power of God. His

authoritative **voice** proclaims His dominion **over the waters**.

i. This is the first of seven descriptions of the **voice of the LORD** in this psalm. Each one emphasizes the idea of the strength and authority of God expressed through His **voice**.

ii. The strength and authority of God's voice is also connected to His *word*. If the voice of God has such power, then the words uttered with that voice have the same strength and authority.

b. **The God of glory thunders**: The association of thunder and the voice of the LORD suggests this psalm was prompted by David witnessing a great storm, hearing the power of thunder, and associating it with the voice of God.

i. "The thunder is not only poetically but instructively called 'the voice of God,' since it peals from on high; it surpasses all other sounds, it inspires awe, it is entirely independent of man, and has been used on some occasions as the grand accompaniment of God's speech to Adam's sons." (Spurgeon)

ii. David saw a mighty thunderstorm and thought, "This shows me something of the power and the voice of God." The spiritual man or woman can see something of the hand of God, or the shadow of God, in almost every event of life. "The thunder is only a poetic image for a reality, the actual voice of God, which is infinitely beyond it." (Boice)

iii. Exo 9:28 (in the Hebrew text) also associates the voice of God with thunder, as does Exo 19:16, when Israel heard from God at Mount Sinai. Additionally, two passages from Job clearly make this connection:

He thunders with His majestic voice, and He does not restrain them when His voice is heard. God thunders marvelously with His voice. (Job 37:4-5)

God asked Job in Job 40:9, *Or can you thunder with a voice like His?*

c. **The LORD is over many waters:** Generally, the ancient Hebrews were not a seafaring people, and they saw the **many waters** of the sea as dangerous and foreboding. Yet David knew that the **powerful** voice of God, **full of majesty**, set Him **over many waters**.

i. The ancient Canaanites recognized deities over the sea (the god *Yam*) and the god of fertility and thunder (*Baal*). Here David recognized that Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, was the real Master **over many waters** and the **God of glory** who **thunders**.

ii. Scientists calculate that a typical thunderstorm (not even the kind of great or major storm described here by David) releases around 10,000,000 kilowatt-hours of energy – the equivalent of a 20-kiloton nuclear warhead. Storms *still* are examples of the massive power of God.

2. (5-9) *The voice of the LORD over creation.*

**The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars,
Yes, the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes them also skip like a calf,
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
The LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh.
The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth,
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everyone says, “Glory!”**

a. **The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars:** The **cedars of Lebanon** were well-known for their size and strength. Yet the LORD's **voice** is so strong that He splinters these mighty trees and sends their wood in flight.

i. Again, we can imagine a mighty thunderbolt striking and shattering a strong cedar tree. David saw this and thought: "The voice of the LORD is like this, though even more powerful!"

ii. **Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox:** **Sirion** is "A Sidonian name for [Mount] Hermon." (Maclaren)

iii. In an archaic translation, the old King James has *unicorn* for **young wild ox**.

b. **The voice of the LORD divides...shakes...makes the deer give birth:** David could see the effect of lightning bolts, and understood that they were an illustration of the power and effect of God's word.

c. **In His temple everyone says, "Glory":** David thought of how thunder and lightning attract attention and give a sense of awe. This sense of **glory** is even more appropriately given to the LORD at **His temple**. There, the people of God do not tremble in fear of the storm, but in awe of their great God – to whom they say, **"Glory!"**

i. "Is not this a noble Psalm to be sung in stormy weather? Can you sing amid the thunder? Will you be able to sing when the last thunders are let loose, and Jesus judges the quick and the dead?" (Spurgeon)

ii. It is also worthwhile for each believer to ask himself or herself if he or she are among those who say, **"Glory!"** – if the word of God, the voice of God, still feels like thunder. If not (and for many this would be

an honest assessment), he or she should humbly come to God and confess that His voice, His Word, sounds more like the drop of a paper clip than a thunderbolt – and ask for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit to make a cold heart warm once again, and dull hearing sharp once more.

iii. “The commentators tell us that in the early church this psalm was often read to children or to an entire congregation during storms.” (Boice)

C. The LORD as the reigning, blessing King.

1. (10) The enthroned LORD.

The LORD sat *enthroned* at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever.

a. **The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood:** David saw the storm bring a deluge of rain, and it made him think of the Genesis account of the **Flood**, remembering it as a remarkable demonstration of the power and authority of the voice of God.

i. “The word rendered ‘flood’ is only used elsewhere in reference to the Noachic deluge, and here has the definite article, which is most naturally explained as fixing the reference to that event.” (Maclaren)

ii. “Psa 29:10 is the only place in the Old Testament where this particular Hebrew word for flood occurs except in the classic flood narrative of Genesis 6-9.” (Boice)

iii. David’s reflection on **the Flood** reminds us of what a staggering expression it was of God’s power and justice. “Even as in the days of the Flood, when he destroyed creation with his power but saved his own, so it is at any time that God’s glory is expressed in the severity of judgment.” (VanGemeren)

b. **The LORD sits as King forever:** The Flood was a radical expression of God's authority; yet His authority did not end those many generations ago. The LORD God continues to sit **as King forever**.

i. Matthew Poole considered the connection between **the LORD sat enthroned at the flood** and **the LORD sits as King forever**: "As God showed himself to be the King and the Judge of the world at that time, so he doth still *sit*, and will sit, as *King forever*, sending such tempests when it pleaseth him." (Poole)

2. (11) *The King as a Shepherd to His people.*

**The LORD will give strength to His people;
The LORD will bless His people with peace.**

a. **The LORD will give strength to His people:** As David considered the earth-shattering strength and authority of God, he recognized that God brought that same strength **to His people**.

b. **The LORD will bless His people with peace:** The power of God may come as a destructive storm upon creation and upon those who rebel against God. Yet God's **people** can be confident that He **will bless** them with **peace**, and the strength of God comes to them as a comfort, not a storm.

i. "During the storm He will give strength to His people. Following it He will give them peace."
(Morgan)

Joy Comes with the Morning

Psa 30:1 I praise you, LORD, because you have saved me and kept my enemies from gloating over me.

Psa 30:2 I cried to you for help, O LORD my God, and you healed me;

Psa 30:3 you kept me from the grave. I was on my way to the depths below, but you restored my life.

Psa 30:4 Sing praise to the LORD, all his faithful people! Remember what the Holy One has done, and give him thanks!

Psa 30:5 His anger lasts only a moment, his goodness for a lifetime. Tears may flow in the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Psa 30:6 I felt secure and said to myself, "I will never be defeated."

Psa 30:7 You were good to me, LORD; you protected me like a mountain fortress. But then you hid yourself from me, and I was afraid.

Psa 30:8 I called to you, LORD; I begged for your help:

Psa 30:9 "What will you gain from my death? What profit from my going to the grave? Are dead people able to praise you? Can they proclaim your unfailing goodness?"

Psa 30:10 Hear me, LORD, and be merciful! Help me, LORD!"

Psa 30:11 You have changed my sadness into a joyful dance; you have taken away my sorrow and surrounded me with joy.

Psa 30:12 So I will not be silent; I will sing praise to you. LORD, you are my God; I will give you thanks forever.

Psalms 30:1-12

Psalms 30 – Remembering the Greatness of God at a Great Event

*This psalm has a unique title: **A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the house of David.** Though the title of the psalm (as it is in the English translation) indicates it was written for the dedication of David's palace, Charles Spurgeon (and Adam Clarke) thought that it was actually*

written prophetically for the dedication of the temple – which David prepared for, but Solomon built. Nevertheless, we take this psalm as being written for the dedication of David’s palace. It says nothing about the house itself; rather the focus is on God and the greatness of His deliverance. At the dedication of David’s house, David wanted God to be praised, not himself.

*Matthew Poole on **A Song**: "This Hebrew word schir may be here taken not simply for a song, but for a joyful song, as it is in Gen 31:27; Exo 15:1; Psa 33:3."*

A. David gives thanks to the LORD.

1. (1) Thanks for victory over enemies.

**I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my foes rejoice over me.**

a. **I will extol You, O LORD**: At the dedication of his own house, David did not extol himself – rather, the LORD. What might have been understood as the achievement of a man was instead the occasion for praising God.

i. 2Sa 5:11-12 (and 1Ch 14:1-2) describe the completion of King David’s palace: *Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons. And they built David a house. So David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted His kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.*

ii. In this, we see that King David knew three things that made his reign great. Every godly leader should know these three things well.

- *David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel*: David knew that God called him and established him over Israel.

- *He had exalted His kingdom*: David knew that the kingdom belonged to God – it was *His kingdom*.
- *For the sake of His people Israel*: David knew God wanted to use him as a channel to bless His people. It was not for David's sake that he was lifted up, but for the *sake of His people Israel*.

b. **For You have lifted me up**: This explains the core reason for David's praise. He knew that his security and status were the work of God. It wasn't as if God did it all as David sat passively; he was a man of energy and action. Nevertheless, it was God's work far more than his own.

i. "The verbal phrase 'you lifted me' is a metaphorical usage of a verb meaning 'to draw up out of the water' (cf. Exo 2:16; Exo 2:19). Like a bucket that was lowered down in a well and then raised to draw water up, so the Lord pulled the psalmist out of the grips of Sheol." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Grace has uplifted us from the pit of hell, from the ditch of sin, from the Slough of Despond, from the bed of sickness, from the bondage of doubts and fears: have we no song to offer for all this?" (Spurgeon)

c. **And have not let my foes rejoice over me**: For David, this was a significant part of God's victory on his behalf. He was constantly confronted by **foes**, and God protected him and made him the winner in regard to them.

2. (2) *Thanks for healing.*

**O LORD my God, I cried out to You,
And You healed me.**

a. **I cried out to You**: David lived a prayerful dependence upon God. God helped, but David **cried out**

and prayed unto Him.

b. **And You healed me:** No doubt there were many times when David received healing from God from both illness and injury. Yet the idea of *healing* is also broad enough to include the sense of God's help and rescue from any great need.

i. Many commentators believe that David remembered when God saved his life from a life-threatening illness. "It has similarities to Hezekiah's psalm of praise after his sickness (Isa 38:10-20)."
(VanGemeren)

3. (3) *Thanks for preservation of life.*

**O LORD, You brought my soul up from the grave;
You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.**

a. **You have brought my soul up from the grave:** We don't know if David here described what we might call a near-death experience or if it would be more like a narrow escape from death. Either way, in his life as a soldier and leader, he had more than one time when death was near, and God rescued his **soul** from death.

b. **You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit:** David wasn't immortal: one day his body would die and he would pass from this life to the next. Yet there were many occasions when God delayed his eventual death, not allowing him to **go down to the pit**.

i. "*To the pit*, i.e. into the grave, which is oft called *the pit*, as in Psa 28:1; Psa 69:15; Psa 88:4; Isa 38:17." (Poole)

ii. As we think of this psalm as being sung at a dedication ceremony for David's palace, it was instructive for David to say to all, "You see the

strength of my kingdom and the splendor of this palace. All seems good and secure on a day like today. Yet no one should forget that there were many times my life was in great danger and I was close to death. Praise the God who delivered me."

B. The testimony of a tested man.

1. (4) The exhortation to praise.

**Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His,
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.**

a. **Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His:** Remembering the great works of God did not only cause David to praise, but also caused him to compel *others* to praise Him. It was fitting, because they also were **saints of His**, His special people.

i. "He felt that he could not praise God enough himself, and therefore he would enlist the hearts of others." (Spurgeon)

b. **Give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name:** Giving **thanks** is another way to praise God for His goodness, and is also good manners.

2. (5) The reason for praise.

**For His anger is but for a moment,
His favor is for life;
Weeping may endure for a night,
But joy comes in the morning.**

a. **His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life:** After calling God's people to praise, King David then gave them more reasons for it. Here he rejoiced that the **anger** of God may be real but momentary, while His **favor** (acceptance, pleasure) is lasting, even **for life**.

i. This is a contrast between the *momentary* nature of God's **anger** with His people and the *lasting***favor** He holds them in. In New Testament vocabulary we might say that the correction or discipline of God is for a moment, but His grace abides forever.

ii. "This description of God's slowness to anger, and readiness to save, is given by a man long and deeply acquainted with God as his *Judge* and as his *Father*." (Clarke)

b. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning: Almost certainly, David said this as a testimony from his own life. There were many tearful nights, followed by joyful mornings – perhaps with the recognition that the mercies of God to His people are new every morning (Lam 3:22-23).

i. **Weeping may endure for a night:** "... (literally, 'will spend the night') is a poetic expression of how weeping personified may spend the night with him, only to be gone by morning." (VanGemeren)

ii. "By itself, this passage could mean, merely, 'into each life a little rain must fall' or 'every cloud has a silver lining' or 'you've got to take the bad with the good' or 'cheer up, things will get better'.... But what David is talking about is God's disfavor versus his favor, expressed in the experiences of life. His conviction is that the favor always outweighs the disfavor for God's people." (Boice)

iii. "Night and morning are contrasted, as are weeping and joy; and the latter contrast is more striking, if it be observed that 'joy' is literally 'a joyful shout,' raised by the voice that had been breaking into audible weeping." (Maclaren)

iv. This is an emphasis on the *certainty* of God's comfort and joy to His people. **Morning** always follows **night**, and the weeping believer may be confident that as he keeps his focus on God, He will bring him once again to **joy**. "*Weeping may endure for a night*": but nights are not for ever." (Spurgeon)

v. "This is a most beautiful and affecting image of the sufferings and exaltation of Christ...of the night of death, and the morning of the resurrection." (Horne)

3. (6-7) *David's troubled testimony.*

Now in my prosperity I said,

"I shall never be moved."

LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong;

You hid Your face, and I was troubled.

a. **In my prosperity I said, "I shall never be moved"**: One may wonder if David said (or sung) this to an assembly at the dedication of his palace and smiled at this line. It seems to communicate an overconfident assurance born of a season of **prosperity**.

i. "We are never in greater danger than in the sunshine of prosperity. To be always indulged of God, and never to taste of trouble, is rather a token of God's neglect than of his tender love." (Struther, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "Self-satisfaction cannot praise Jehovah. Therefore it must be corrected by discipline. The final note of praise shows that through affliction and by deliverance the lesson has been learned." (Morgan)

b. **LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong**: King David confessed that the strength of his life and kingdom was not due to his **prosperity**, but to the **favor** of God.

i. The palace of King David in Jerusalem (discovered by archaeologists) is situated in the great hills of Jerusalem. We almost see King David making a gesture toward these mountains and telling everyone that it was God's **favor** that **made my mountain stand strong**.

c. **You hid Your face, and I was troubled:** Without the constant sustaining work of God, David was deeply **troubled**. This isn't to imply that God played a hiding game with David, constantly hiding and then revealing Himself to him. The idea is that David was completely dependent upon the presence of God, fellowship with Him, and His favor.

i. "The Hebrew word *bahal* signifies to be greatly troubled, to be sorely terrified, as you may see in 1Sa 28:21, 'And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled.' Here is the same Hebrew word

bahal." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

C. A prayer and its answer.

1. (8-10) *The prayer from a time of trouble.*

**I cried out to You, O LORD;
And to the LORD I made supplication:
"What profit *is there* in my blood,
When I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise You?
Will it declare Your truth?
Hear, O LORD, and have mercy on me;
LORD, be my helper!"**

a. **I cried out to You, O LORD:** In Psa 30:2 King David first said that he **cried out** to God. This is perhaps the content of his prayer on one of those occasions.

b. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? This was David's prayer in a life-threatening situation. He made rational arguments to God, knowing that he would *certainly* praise God if he escaped death, but he was *uncertain* if he could praise God from the **pit** or the **dust** of the grave.

i. These words of King David sound strange to someone familiar with the New Testament. It seems very different from the triumphant confidence of Paul who said, *to live is Christ and to die is gain* (Php 1:21). David seemed to see no *gain* in death, and therefore he pleaded that God would preserve his life.

ii. Only a shadowy understanding of the afterlife is present in the Old Testament. There are certainly moments of triumphant faith, such as when Job said, *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God* (Job 19:25-26). Yet there are also moments of uncertainty, such as here in Psa 30:8-9.

iii. It wasn't until the New Testament that God revealed more clearly the fate of those who trust God from this life to the next. In 2Ti 1:10, Paul says these things have *now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*.

iv. Therefore David logically – and rightly, according to the revelation he had – only knew with certainty that he could praise God on this side of death. It was a valid question to bring before God in prayer. "It was an argument with God, an urging of reasons, a

pleading of his cause. It was not a statement of doctrinal opinions, nor a narration of experience.”
(Spurgeon)

c. **Hear, O LORD, and have mercy on me:** Even though David prayed with rational reason, in an even greater sense he simply relied on the **mercy** of God. It was as if he said, “LORD, here are many good reasons for You to answer my prayer. Yet beyond all these, I simply ask for Your **mercy**, and ask You to be **my helper**.”

i. **LORD, be my helper:** “Another compact, expressive, ever fitting prayer. It is suitable to hundreds of the cases of the Lord’s people; it is well becoming in the minister when he is going to preach, to the sufferer upon the bed of pain, to the toiler in the field of service, to the believer under temptation, to the man of God under adversity; when God helps, difficulties vanish.” (Spurgeon)

2. (11) *The joyful answer to prayer.*

**You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with
gladness,**

a. **You have turned for me my mourning into dancing:** The dedication of David’s palace was a happy event. Without specifically mentioning the dedication of the house, David used it as a reason to remember all the times God brought him from sadness to joy, from **mourning** to **dancing**.

b. **You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness:** Using the Hebrew literary tool of repetition for the sake of emphasis, David repeats the idea of the transition from sadness to **gladness**. It was a

happy day, but God had also been faithful to David in more difficult times.

i. "This might be true of David, delivered from his calamity; it was true of Christ, arising from the tomb, to die no more; it is true of the penitent, exchanging his sackcloth for the garments of salvation; and it will be verified in us all, at the last day, when we shall put off the dishonours of the grave, to shine in glory everlasting." (Horne)

ii. "My 'sackcloth' was but a loose garment about me, which might easily be put off at pleasure, but my '*gladness*' is *girt* about me, to be fast and sure, and cannot leave me though it would; at least none shall be able to take it from me." (Baker, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (12) *God glorified and thanked for answered prayer.*

To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to You and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

a. **To the end that my glory may sing praise to You:**
King David revealed the primary reason for God's transforming work in his life. It wasn't primarily to give him palaces; it was so that David could **praise** the LORD and **not be silent**.

i. God worked in David's life so that He would bring Himself glory and appropriate praise. Though it clearly benefited David, it was primarily for God's own glory that He did this. This principle means that God has a special reason to bring His transforming work to lives that will give Him praise.

ii. As it says, **that my glory may sing praise**, indicating that King David sang those praises with passion and exuberance, welling forth from whatever

glory was associated with him as a man, a soldier, and a king.

iii. **Sing praise** indicates that David knew that in some special way, God regards and receives praise that is presented to Him in song. We sense that to David, it would be a sin to **be silent**.

b. **O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever**: King David closed this song for the dedication of his house with a determination to thank God **forever**. Palaces seem to be permanent things, but they eventually crumble. Yet God will rightly be thanked and praised **forever**.

i. "He concludeth as he began, engaging his heart to everlasting thankfulness; and therein becoming a worthy pattern to all posterity." (Trapp)

Into Your Hand I Commit My Spirit

Psa 31:1 I come to you, LORD, for protection; never let me be defeated. You are a righteous God; save me, I pray!

Psa 31:2 Hear me! Save me now! Be my refuge to protect me; my defense to save me.

Psa 31:3 You are my refuge and defense; guide me and lead me as you have promised.

Psa 31:4 Keep me safe from the trap that has been set for me; shelter me from danger.

Psa 31:5 I place myself in your care. You will save me, LORD; you are a faithful God.

Psa 31:6 You hate those who worship false gods, but I trust in you.

Psa 31:7 I will be glad and rejoice because of your constant love. You see my suffering; you know my trouble.

Psa 31:8 You have not let my enemies capture me; you have given me freedom to go where I wish.

Psa 31:9 Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in trouble; my eyes are tired from so much crying; I am completely worn out.

Psa 31:10 I am exhausted by sorrow, and weeping has shortened my life. I am weak from all my troubles; even my bones are wasting away.

Psa 31:11 All my enemies, and especially my neighbors, treat me with contempt. Those who know me are afraid of me; when they see me in the street, they run away.

Psa 31:12 Everyone has forgotten me, as though I were dead; I am like something thrown away.

Psa 31:13 I hear many enemies whispering; terror is all around me. They are making plans against me, plotting to kill me.

Psa 31:14 But my trust is in you, O LORD; you are my God.

Psa 31:15 I am always in your care; save me from my enemies, from those who persecute me.

Psa 31:16 Look on your servant with kindness; save me in your constant love.

Psa 31:17 I call to you, LORD; don't let me be disgraced. May the wicked be disgraced; may they go silently down to the world of the dead.

Psa 31:18 Silence those liars—all the proud and arrogant who speak with contempt about the righteous.

Psa 31:19 How wonderful are the good things you keep for those who honor you! Everyone knows how good you are, how securely you protect those who trust you.

Psa 31:20 You hide them in the safety of your presence from the plots of others; in a safe shelter you hide them from the insults of their enemies.

Psa 31:21 Praise the LORD! How wonderfully he showed his love for me when I was surrounded and attacked!

Psa 31:22 I was afraid and thought that he had driven me out of his presence. But he heard my cry, when I called to him for help.

Psa 31:23 Love the LORD, all his faithful people. The LORD protects the faithful, but punishes the proud as they deserve.

Psa 31:24 Be strong, be courageous, all you that hope in the LORD.

Psalms 31:1-24

Psalms 31 – Shelter from Trouble in the Secret Place of God's Presence

*This psalm is simply titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David**. Charles Spurgeon rightly said regarding the title of this psalm, "The dedication to the chief musician proves that this song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a deathblow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung." We have no definite marking place in David's life for this psalm because he was so often in trouble. It resonates with deep and personal trust in God in the depths of difficulty.*

An interesting feature of this psalm is that it is often quoted in other passages of Scripture.

- The author of Psalms 71 (possibly David himself) quotes the first three verses of Psalms 31 to start Psalms 71.
- Jonah seems to quote Psa 31:6 in Jon 2:8, his prayer from the belly of the great fish.
- Jeremiah quoted Psa 31:13 six times, in Jer 6:25; Jer 20:3; Jer 20:10; Jer 46:5; Jer 49:29, and Lam 2:22.
- Paul quoted Psa 31:24 in 1Co 16:13 (according to Adam Clarke, this is more clear in the Septuagint – the early Greek translation of the Old Testament).
- Most significantly, Psa 31:5 was quoted by Jesus Christ on the cross as His final words before yielding His life (Luk 23:46). Stephen, the first martyr of the church, also alluded to Psa 31:5 (Act 7:59).

A. A plea for rescue, and confidence in God's answer.

1. (1) Trusting the God who delivers His people.

In You, O LORD, I put my trust;

Let me never be ashamed;

Deliver me in Your righteousness.

a. **In You, O LORD, I put my trust:** This psalm of David begins in a similar way to many of his other psalms – with a declaration of trust in God in a time of trouble. We do not know the precise nature or time of the trouble, other than it severely afflicted David (Psa 31:9-13) and made him despair of life. Nevertheless, David proclaimed his trust in the LORD.

b. **Let me never be ashamed:** David's bold declaration of trust showed that he was not ashamed to call upon the LORD. He considered it appropriate that God answered by **never** allowing His servant to **never be ashamed** before his enemies and adversaries.

c. **Deliver me in Your righteousness:** Because David trusted in God, he asked God to act righteously on his

behalf, and to **deliver** him. He asked that the **righteousness** of God work on his behalf.

i. Early in the 16th Century, a German monk and seminary professor named Martin Luther taught through Psalms, verse-by-verse, at the University of Wittenberg. In his teaching he came upon this statement in Psa 31:1 (31:2 in German). The passage confused him; how could God's **righteousness** deliver him? The righteousness of God – His great justice – could only condemn him to hell as a righteous punishment for his sins.

ii. One night up in a tower in the monastery, Luther thought about this passage in Psalms and also read Rom 1:17 : *For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed*. Luther said he thought about this day and night, until he finally understood what the **righteousness** of God revealed by the gospel is. It is not speaking of the holy righteousness of God that *condemns* the guilty sinner, but of the God-kind of **righteousness** that is *given* to the sinner who puts his trust in Jesus Christ.

iii. Luther said of this experience: "I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Therefore I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise..... This passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven." Martin Luther was born again, and the reformation began in his heart. One great Lutheran scholar said this was "the happiest day in Luther's life."

2. (2-4) *A plea for rescue based on relationship.*

**Bow down Your ear to me,
Deliver me speedily;
Be my rock of refuge,
A fortress of defense to save me.
For You *are* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore, for Your name's sake,
Lead me and guide me.
Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid
for me,
For You *are* my strength.**

a. **Bow down...deliver me...be my rock:** In the previous verse David established the basis of God's rescue: *deliver me in Your righteousness*. David then called on God to act righteously on behalf of His needy servant, to rescue and protect him.

i. Clarke on **bow down Your ear to me:** "Put thy ear to my lips, that thou mayest hear all that my *feebleness* is capable of uttering. We generally put our ear near to the lips of the sick and dying, that we may hear what they say. To this the text appears to allude."

ii. David asked, **be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me**; then he said, **for You are my rock and my fortress**. Maclaren suggested that David's thought was, "Be what Thou art; manifest Thyself in act to be what Thou art in nature: be what I, Thy poor servant, have taken Thee to be. My heart has clasped Thy revelation of Thyself and fled to this strong tower."

iii. "'You are...then be...,' should be the prayer of every Christian." (Boice)

b. **Therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me and guide me:** David did not ask for rescue because *he* was so good, but **for Your name's sake**. David believed that

if God would **lead** and **guide** him, it would bring honor to God and His name.

c. **Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me:** David knew his enemies wanted to trap and destroy him, but he also knew that God could rescue him even from clever and determined enemies.

3. (5-8) *David's confidence in the LORD.*

"In this turn of the stream, faith does not so much supplicate as meditate." (Maclaren)

**Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.
I have hated those who regard useless idols;
But I trust in the LORD.
I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy,
For You have considered my trouble;
You have known my soul in adversities,
And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a wide place.**

a. **Into Your hand I commit my spirit:** David asked to be delivered from his enemies and their snares, but not so he could live unto himself. He utterly cast himself upon God, committing the deepest part of himself to God.

i. Jesus expressed His total surrender and submission to God on the cross when He quoted this line from Psalms 31. Luk 23:46 records that Jesus said, *Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit* – and then Jesus gave His last breath on the cross. "Thus he does not surrender his life despondingly to death for destruction, but with triumphant consciousness to the Father for resurrection." (Lange, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. Yet this committal of the soul unto God the Father is not reserved for David and the Son of David alone.

Stephen, the first martyr of the church had the idea of this text in mind with his final words (Act 7:59).

iii. **Into Your hand I commit my spirit:** "These words, as they stand in the *Vulgate*, were in the highest credit among our ancestors; by whom they were used in all dangers, difficulties, and in the article of death. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*, was used by the sick when about to expire, if they were sensible; and if not, the priest said it in their behalf." (Clarke)

iv. "These were the last words of Polycarp, of Bernard, of Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of Luther, of Melancthon, and many others." (Perowne, cited in Spurgeon)

v. "When John Huss was condemned to be burned at the stake, the bishop who conducted the ceremony ended with the chilling words, 'And now we commit thy soul to the devil.' Huss replied calmly, 'I commit my spirit into thy hands, Lord Jesus Christ; unto thee I commend my spirit, which thou hast redeemed.'" (Boice)

b. **You have redeemed me:** David understood that his surrender to God was appropriate because it was God who had **redeemed** him. He belonged to God both in *gratitude* for rescue, and in recognition that God had *purchased* him.

i. "In the Old Testament the word 'redeem' (*pada*) is seldom used of atonement: it mostly means to rescue or ransom out of trouble." (Kidner)

ii. "Redemption is a solid basis for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past

deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance.”
(Spurgeon)

c. **O LORD God of truth:** This is a second reason why it was good and appropriate for David to surrender his life to God – because God is the **God of truth**, and the **truth** demanded David’s service and allegiance. David cared about what was true.

d. **I have hated those who regard useless idols:** David’s surrender to God meant that he also had to *resist* the recognition or worship of idols – which are **useless idols**, having no power to speak or save. In contrast David could say, “**But I trust in the LORD.**”

e. **I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy:** David’s surrender and submission to God didn’t produce misery – he was happy and joyful. Much of this was because his heart overflowed with gratitude, thinking of all God had done for him.

- **You have considered my trouble:** David was happy because he knew God did not ignore him in his time of **trouble**.

- **You have known my soul in adversities:** David was happy because he knew God had deep, substantial knowledge of David – even to the **soul** – in his seasons of **adversities**.

- **And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy:** David was happy because he knew that God answered (or would answer) his prayer to be delivered from the snares of his enemies.

- **You have set my feet in a wide place:** David was happy because God did not only preserve him from enemies, but He also **set** David in a place of safety and security.

i. **You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities:** "When we are so bewildered as not to know our own state, he knows us altogether. He has known us and will know us: O for grace to know more of him! 'Man, know thyself,' is a good philosophic precept, but 'Man, thou art known of God,' is a superlative consolation." (Spurgeon)

B. Trouble and trust.

1. (9-13) *David describes the depths of his trouble.*

**Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble;
My eye wastes away with grief,
Yes, my soul and my body!
For my life is spent with grief,
And my years with sighing;
My strength fails because of my iniquity,
And my bones waste away.
I am a reproach among all my enemies,
But especially among my neighbors,
And *am* repulsive to my acquaintances;
Those who see me outside flee from me.
I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind;
I am like a broken vessel.
For I hear the slander of many;
Fear *is* on every side;
While they take counsel together against me,
They scheme to take away my life.**

a. **Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble:**

The previous section of this psalm ended with calm trust and gratitude to God. Here David once again took up the lament, showing that both rest and adversity come to God's people in seasons. Yet in his trouble, David looks again to the LORD.

i. "It is as if David is riding an emotional roller coaster. Or, as if he is riding a wave from one high crest to a

trough and then back to another high crest in closing." (Boice)

ii. **My soul and my body**: Literally, **body** is *belly*. "... i.e. my bowels contained in my belly; which was the seat of the affections, and fountains of support and nourishment to the whole body. Thus the whole man, both soul and body, inside and outside, are consumed." (Poole)

b. **My eye wastes away with grief**: David described his pitiful condition in terms that seem to be taken from the Book of Job. His affliction was

- Physical (**my strength fails...my bones waste away**). "The poetical expression need not imply that he is physically sick but could mean that his mental anguish has sapped his physical strength, to a point approaching death." (VanGemeran)

- Emotional (**my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing...fear is on every side**).

- Social (**a reproach among all my enemies...repulsive to my acquaintances**).

- Mortal (**they take counsel together against me, they scheme to take away my life**).

- Spiritual (**because of my iniquity**).

i. "Here the feelings of confidence ebb away in a flood of tears." (VanGemeran)

c. **I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel**: With poetry and power, David expressed how complete his difficulty was.

i. **I am a reproach among all my enemies**: "If anyone strives after patience and humility, he is a hypocrite. If he allows himself in the pleasures of this world, he is a glutton. If he seeks justice, he is

impatient; if he seeks it not, he is a fool. If he would be prudent, he is stingy; if he would make others happy, he is dissolute. If he gives himself up to prayer, he is vainglorious. And this is the great loss of the church, that by means like these many are held back from goodness in which the Psalmist lamenting says, *'I became a reproof among all mine enemies.'*" (Chrysostom, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. Those who see me outside flee from me:

"Either loathing me as a monster of men, and an unlucky spectacle, and such a villain as mine enemies represented me, and they believed me to be; or to prevent their own danger and ruin, which might be occasioned by it." (Poole)

iii. I hear the slander of many: "A man had better be dead than be smothered in slander. Of the dead we say nothing but good, but in the Psalmist's case they said nothing but evil." (Spurgeon)

d. Fear is on every side; while they take counsel together against me, they scheme to take away my life: David seemed almost overwhelmed by the dangers around him, but only *almost* and not completely.

i. "This was literally true during much of David's reign. The kingdom was surrounded by hostile neighbors, just as the present nation of Israel is surrounded by hostile Arab neighbors. But David may also be thinking of plots within his kingdom by Jewish enemies or of the days he had to flee from King Saul." (Boice)

2. (14-18) *In the midst of all his trouble, David declares his trust in God.*

**But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."**

**My times *are* in Your hand;
Deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
And from those who persecute me.
Make Your face shine upon Your servant;
Save me for Your mercies' sake.
Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called
upon You;
Let the wicked be ashamed;
Let them be silent in the grave.
Let the lying lips be put to silence,
Which speak insolent things proudly and
contemptuously against the righteous.**

a. **But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD:** However great David's troubles were, his **trust** in God was even greater. He took careful inventory of his crisis but would not dwell on it. He understood that Yahweh was his God (**You are my God**) and therefore greater than all his trouble.

b. **My times are in Your hand:** David could not bear the thought of being given over to the **hand of his enemies**, but he was completely at peace (and even happy) with the knowledge, "**My times are in Your hand.**"

i. David could say **my times are in Your hand** because He understood that God was in control and ruled from heaven. Yet he also said this because in faith he had committed all things into God's hand.

ii. Late in David's life. he sinned by taking an unauthorized census of Israel. God presented him with the option of three punishments. David chose the punishment that would most completely set them in the hands of the Lord, explaining: *Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great;*

but do not let me fall into the hand of man (2Sa 24:14).

iii. Boice saw in all this an application to the seasons of life for the Christian.

- The times of our *youth* are in God's hand, times when often we are subject to the decisions others make for us.
- The times of our *maturity* are in God's hand, times when we should be about our Father's business and face both apparent success and failure in it.
- The times of our *old age* are in God's hand, when God will care for us and bless those days as much as the others.

iv. G. Campbell Morgan saw in the words "**my times**" and in the entire psalm an allusion to the seasons of Christian experience. Morgan added the thought, "We need them all to complete our year!"

- Autumn (Psa 31:1-8): "With its winds and gathering clouds, yet having sunlight and a golden fruitage even though the breath of death is everywhere."
- Winter (Psa 31:9-13): "Chill and lifeless, full of sobs and sighing."
- Spring (Psa 31:14-18): "With its hope and expectation and its sweeping rains and bursting sun gleams."
- Summer (Psa 31:19-24): "At last the bright and golden summer."

v. "If we believe that all our times are in God's hand, we shall be expecting great things from our heavenly Father. When we get into a difficulty we shall say, 'I am now going to see the wonders of God, and to

learn again how surely he delivers them that trust in him.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Make Your face to shine upon Your servant:** David borrowed from the priestly blessing described in Num 6:23-27, asking for the goodness and the favor of God to be showered upon him.

d. **Let the wicked be ashamed; let them be silent in the grave:** David asked God to do to his enemies that which his enemies wished to do unto David.

i. **Do not let me be ashamed:** “...i.e. Disappointed of my hopes.” (Trapp)

C. Praise, both personal and public.

1. (19-22) *David praises God on a personal level.*

**Oh, how great is Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!
You shall hide them in the secret place of Your
presence
From the plots of man;
You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion
From the strife of tongues.
Blessed be the LORD,
For He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a
strong city!
For I said in my haste,
“I am cut off from before Your eyes”;
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried out to You.**

a. **Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You:** The same David who knew such trouble in Psa 31:9-13 praised God so completely at the end of the song. This is because David

had a deep trust in God (as reflected in Psa 31:14-18), and that trust was rewarded with joy.

b. **You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence:** Attacked by so many enemies and so many troubles, David found security in **the secret place of God's presence**. There was comfort and strength in the hidden place of God's **presence**, of true fellowship with Him.

i. There are many followers of Jesus Christ who seem to know very little of **the secret place of God's presence**. They regard it as only a thing for mystics or the super-spiritual. Yet David was a warrior and man well acquainted with the realities of life. It is true that the life of the spirit seems to come more easily for some than others, but there is an aspect of **the secret place of God's presence** that is for everyone who puts his trust in Him.

ii. **In the secret place of Your presence:** "With the covering of thy countenance.' Their life shall be so hidden with Christ in God, that their enemies shall not be able to find them out. To such a hiding-place Satan himself dare not approach. There *the pride of man* cannot come." (Clarke)

c. **From the plots of man; you shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues:** The presence of God was so secure for David that he found refuge from not only the **plots** of his enemies, but even from the attacks of their words (**the strife of tongues**).

d. **For I said in my haste, "I am cut off from before Your eyes":** Earlier in his time of trouble, David hastily said and felt that God had forgotten him and no longer saw him with favor. Yet when David **cried out to** God, He **heard the voice of** David's **supplication**.

2. (23-24) *A call for all God's people to praise Him.*

Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints!
For the LORD preserves the faithful,
And fully repays the proud person.
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart,
All you who hope in the LORD.

a. **Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints:** David's experience with God could not be kept to himself. He had to use what God had done in his life as the motivation and lesson to exhort all God's

saints to love the LORD.

i. "The psalmist has been absorbed with his own troubles till now, but thankfulness expands his vision, and suddenly there is with him a multitude of fellow-dependents on God's goodness. He hungers alone, but he feasts in company." (Maclaren)

ii. "Do we, if we are called the saints of the Lord, need to be exhorted to love him? If we do, shame upon us! And we do, I am quite sure; so let us be ashamed and confounded that it should ever be needful to urge us to love our Lord." (Spurgeon)

iii. A soul that truly loves God does not lack any reasons for loving Him. God gives us many reasons to love Him. Spurgeon said of the call to **love the LORD**, "it has a thousand arguments to enforce it."

- Love God because of the excellence of His character.
- Love God because it is such a pleasant and profitable exercise.
- Love God because it is so beneficial to do so.

- Love God because it is the way to be cleansed from sin.
- Love God because it will strengthen you in times of trial.
- Love God because it will strengthen you for service.
- Love God because it is most ennobling.

iv. "You may pull up the sluices of your being, and let all your life-floods flow forth in this saved stream, for you cannot love God too much. Some passions of our nature may be exaggerated; and, towards certain objects, they may be carried too far; but the heart, when it is turned towards God, can never be too warm, nor too excited, nor too firmly fixed on the divine object: 'O love the Lord, all ye his saints.'" (Spurgeon)

b. The LORD preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person: Both aspects are true. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. This encouragement to praise God has a warning to those who refuse to do so.

c. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the LORD: David closed this psalm as a true leader and friend, encouraging others to find what he had found in God. God's people have reason for **good courage**, because God does **strengthen** the trusting, hoping **heart**.

i. **Be of good courage:** "Dear friends, if you want to get out of diffidence, and timidity, and despondency, you must *rouse yourselves up*. This is incumbent upon you, for the text puts it so: 'Be of good courage.' Do not sit still, and rub your eyes, and say, 'I cannot help it, I must always be dull like this.' You must not be so; in the name of God, you are

commanded in the text to 'be of good courage.' If you are indolent, like that, you must not expect the grace of God to operate upon you as though you were a block of wood, and could be made into something against your will. Oh, no! You must determine to be of good courage." (Spurgeon)

Blessed Are the Forgiven

Psa 32:1 Happy are those whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned.

Psa 32:2 Happy is the one whom the LORD does not accuse of doing wrong and who is free from all deceit.

Psa 32:3 When I did not confess my sins, I was worn out from crying all day long.

Psa 32:4 Day and night you punished me, LORD; my strength was completely drained, as moisture is dried up by the summer heat.

Psa 32:5 Then I confessed my sins to you; I did not conceal my wrongdoings. I decided to confess them to you, and you forgave all my sins.

Psa 32:6 So all your loyal people should pray to you in times of need; when a great flood of trouble comes rushing in, it will not reach them.

Psa 32:7 You are my hiding place; you will save me from trouble. I sing aloud of your salvation, because you protect me.

Psa 32:8 The LORD says, "I will teach you the way you should go; I will instruct you and advise you.

Psa 32:9 Don't be stupid like a horse or a mule, which must be controlled with a bit and bridle to make it submit."

Psa 32:10 The wicked will have to suffer, but those who trust in the LORD are protected by his constant love.

Psa 32:11 You that are righteous, be glad and rejoice because of what the LORD has done. You that obey him,

shout for joy!

Psalms 32:1-11

Psalms 32 -The Blessings of Forgiveness, Protection, and Guidance

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of David. A Contemplation.** According to James Montgomery Boice, the Hebrew word for **Contemplation** (maskil) might be better understood as "instruction." This is the first of twelve psalms with this title. It is full of instruction and contemplation, and it is worthy of meditation, as indicated by the frequent repetition of Selah, three times in only eleven verses.*

The psalm itself does not tell us the specific occasion in David's life which prompted this song. In Psalms 51 – which was clearly written after David's sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah – David promised to "teach transgressors Your ways" (Psa 51:13), and this psalm may be the fulfillment of that vow. John Trapp said that Psalms 32, 51 are "tuned together."

"It is a Psalm of penitence, but it is also the song of a ransomed soul rejoicing in the wonders of the grace of God. Sin is dealt with; sorrow is comforted; ignorance is instructed." (G. Campbell Morgan)

"This was Saint Augustine's favorite psalm. Augustine had it inscribed on the wall next to his bed before he died in order to meditate on it better." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. The great blessing of sin forgiven.

1. (1-2) The blessing of forgiven sin described.

**Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered.**

**Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not
impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit *there is* no deceit.**

a. **Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven:**

David spoke of the great blessing there is for the man or woman who knows the forgiveness of God. His sin is no longer exposed; it **is covered**.

i. "The word blessed is in the plural, *oh, the blessednesses!* The double joys, the bundles of happiness, the mountains of delight!" (Spurgeon)

ii. Psalms 1 tells the way to be blessed: Don't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, don't stand in the path of sinners, but delight in God's word – thinking deeply on it all the time. Yet if one has failed to do this and fallen into sin, Psalms 32 shows another way to be blessed – to make full confession and repentance of sin.

iii. David had great opportunity to know this blessedness in his own life. This great man of God – a man after God's heart – nevertheless had some significant seasons of sin and what may be called backsliding or spiritual decline. Notable among these were David's time at Ziklag (1 Samuel 27, 29-30) and David's sin regarding Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 11). After both occasions, David came to confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

iv. Therefore, David knew what it was like to be a guilty sinner. He knew the seriousness of sin and how good it is to be truly **forgiven**. He knew – as Paul would later state in Rom 4:6-8 – *the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works*. If David were judged on works alone, the righteous God must condemn him; nevertheless he knew by experience, **blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered**.

v. "Sin is an odious thing, the devil's drivel or vomit, the corruption of a dead soul, the filthiness of flesh

and spirit. Get a cover for it, therefore.” (Trapp)

b. **Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity:** David spoke of *real* forgiveness by the declaration of God, not merely the quieting of a noisy conscience or an imagined peace with God. This was a standing with God declared and given, not earned.

i. In these first two verses, David used three words to describe sin.

- The idea behind **transgression** is crossing a line, defying authority.
- The idea behind **sin** is falling short of or missing a mark.
- The idea behind **iniquity** is of crookedness and distortion.

ii. In the first two verses, David used three terms to describe what God does to put away sin.

- The idea behind **forgiven** is the lifting of a burden or a debt.
- The idea behind **covered** is that of sacrificial blood covering sin.
- The idea behind **does not impute** is bookkeeping; it does not count against a person.

iii. “The psalmist declares that the forgiveness of sin, of whatever kind – whether against God or man, whether great or small, whether conscientious or inadvertent, or whether by omission or commission – is to be found in God.” (VanGemenen)

c. **And in whose spirit there is no deceit:** The prior life of sin and double-living was over for David, the repentant and forgiven sinner. The forgiven life needs no more **deceit** to cover one’s ways.

i. "You must all have noticed in David's case that after he had fallen into his foul sin with Bathsheba he ceased to exhibit that transparent truth-speaking character which had charmed us so much before." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The lesson from the whole is this: be honest. Sinner, may God make you honest. Do not deceive yourself. Make a clean breast of it before God. Have an honest religion, or have none at all. Have a religion of the heart, or else have none. Put aside the mere vestment and garment of piety, and let your soul be right within. Be honest." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) *The agony of unconfessed, hidden sin.*

**When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.
Selah**

a. **When I kept silent, my bones grew old:** The now-forgiven David remembered his spiritual and mental state when he kept his sin hidden and was **silent** instead of confessing and repenting. The stress of a double life and unconfessed sin made him feel old, oppressed, and dry.

i. "*I kept silence*, not merely I was silent, I *kept* silence, resolutely, perseveringly; I kept it notwithstanding all the remembrance of my past mercies, notwithstanding my reproaches of conscience, and my anguish of heart." (Evans, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "If David's symptoms are exception, his stubbornness is common enough." (Kidner)

b. **For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me:** No doubt David was slow to acknowledge this, yet in

looking back he understood that his misery was directly connected to the oppression of unresolved sin and rebellion against God.

i. "God's hand is very helpful when it uplifts, but it is awful when it presses down: better a world on the shoulder, like Atlas, than God's hand on the heart, like David." (Spurgeon)

ii. David seemed to ache under the *result* of his sin (guilt and the lack of true fellowship with God) more than the sin itself. Ideally we are all terribly grieved by sin itself, but there is something to be said for confession and humility for the sake of the result of our sins.

c. **My vitality was turned into the drought of summer:** David's dryness and misery were actually a *good* thing. They demonstrated that he was in fact a son of God, and that the covenant God would not allow him to remain comfortable in habitual or unconfessed sin. One who feels no misery or dryness in such a state has far greater concerns for time and eternity.

i. "The pain of a blow upon an ulcerated part, however exquisite, is well compensated for, if, by promoting a discharge, it effect a cure." (Horne)

ii. This work of the Holy Spirit, convicting the man or woman of God of his or her sin and hardness of heart, is an essential mark of those who truly belong to God. The consideration of this work is so important that David gave the pause for meditative consideration, **Selah**. "The Selah indicates a swell or prolongation of the accompaniment, to emphasise this terrible picture of a soul gnawing itself." (Maclaren)

3. (5) *The goodness of confession and forgiveness.*

**I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the
LORD,"
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah**

a. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden: David's first problem was the sin he committed – in this context, probably the immorality with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband to cover the immorality. David's second problem was the double life he lived to hide those sins. It was only as David was ready to repent and end the second problem that God would graciously forgive the first problem.

b. I will confess my transgressions to the LORD: Forgiveness was ready and waiting for David as he agreed with God about the nature and guilt of his sin. Restoration was ready, but the confession of sin was the path to it.

i. Before the communion service in the English Prayer Book, the minister is instructed to give this invitation: "Come to me or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open your grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word you may receive the benefit of absolution." There can be great value to *opening one's grief*.

ii. Real, deep, genuine confession of sin has been a feature of every genuine awakening or revival in the past 250 years. But it isn't anything new, as demonstrated by the revival in Ephesus recorded in Act 19:17-20 : *many who believed came confessing and telling their deeds*. Christians were getting right with God, and open confession was part of it.

iii. "Ah! but there are too many who make confession, having no broken hearts, no streaming eyes, no

flowing tears, no humbled spirits. Know ye this, that ten thousand confessions, if they are made by hardened hearts, if they do not spring from really contrite spirits, they shall be only additions to your guilt as they are mockeries before the Most High.” (Spurgeon)

c. **And You forgave the iniquity of my sin:** David’s confession of sin did not *earn* forgiveness of his sins, but he did *receive* it. Fellowship with God was restored. David confessed and experienced this forgiveness immediately, just as the prodigal son confessed and was immediately forgiven. There was no probation, no wait-and-see period.

i. “Were angels to descend from heaven, to comfort the dejected spirit of a sinner, they could say nothing more effectual for the purpose, than what is said in the verse of our Psalm.” (Horne)

ii. Adam Clarke on the **Selah** in Psa 32:5 : “This is all true; I

know it; I *felt* it; I *feel* it.”

B. Blessings for the pardoned: protection and guidance.

1. (6-7) *The blessing of God’s protection.*

For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You

In a time when You may be found;

Surely in a flood of great waters

They shall not come near him.

You *are* my hiding place;

You shall preserve me from trouble;

You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.

Selah

a. **For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You:** Knowing that God is so great in forgiving mercy gives the **godly** a greater reason to seek God in the confidence that He **may be found**, and is therefore ready to connect with His servant.

i. "Coming where it does, its call for a teachable spirit drives home the lesson of verses 1-5 in a positive form. If forgiveness is good, fellowship is better."
(Kidner)

b. **Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him:** David knew what it was to be overwhelmed and mired in the guilt and misery of sin – and that God could deliver in that crisis and others.

c. **You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance:** Setting one term upon another, David gloried in the protection he now felt as one in fellowship with God and under His care.

- God Himself was his **hiding place**, a secure shelter. A good hiding place has strength and height, is not easily seen, and is reliable. In more modern phrasing we might say that Jesus is our *safe-room* or *panic-room*.

- David found security surrounded by God's own **songs of deliverance**, sung in the joy and confidence of victory.

i. The idea of God as our **hiding place** is also associated with the idea of finding shelter in the house of the Lord, in His own presence. This is indicated by the use of the same Hebrew phrasing in two earlier psalms.

- *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle...*

(Psa 27:5).

- *You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence (Psa 31:20).*

- ii. "Observe that the same man who in the fourth verse was oppressed by the presence of God, here finds a shelter in him. See what honest confession and full forgiveness will do!" (Spurgeon)

2. (8-9) *God appeals to His people to pay attention and gain understanding.*

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will guide you with My eye.

Do not be like the horse or like the mule,

Which have no understanding,

Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,

Else they will not come near you.

a. **I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye:** Here David prophetically spoke in God's voice unto His people. Through this, God promised to **instruct, teach, and guide** His people.

b. **I will guide you with My eye:** The idea is of one who waits upon another so attentively that a mere look at the eye indicates the will. A butler waiting upon his master at dinner can illustrate this; the master need only *look* at the salt shaker and the butler understands that he wants it. God promised that for those who diligently seek and focus on God, He will also guide.

- i. This is a great blessing that comes from being forgiven and having fellowship restored. In David's season of guilt and misery, he did not (so to speak) look upon God for the guidance of His eye, and therefore he could not receive it. When fellowship was

restored, the blessing of such close relationship could be enjoyed again.

ii. Many modern translators put the sense as merely God watching over the believer, which is true. Yet since the context in the following lines regards guidance and responsiveness to the Lord, it's fair to render the lines as the King James and New King James versions do.

c. **Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding:** The **horse** and the **mule** are used as examples of animals that are not easily guided. They need the **bit and bridle**, and sometimes rigorous training, before they are useful to the master.

i. "The horse and the mule are turned with difficulty; they must be constrained with *bit* and *bridle*. Do not *be like them*; do not oblige your Maker to have continual recourse to afflictions, trials, and severe dispensations of providence, to keep you in the way, or to recover you after you have gone out of it." (Clarke)

d. **Else they will not come near you:** David understood this to describe *his* condition in his season of unconfessed sin – *he* was like a stubborn animal that could only be guided through pain or severity. God allowed the Amalekites to devastate David and his men (1 Samuel 30). God sent Nathan to speak sharply to David in his sin (2 Samuel 12).

i. Like a stubborn animal, David would not **come near** to God until he had these terrible experiences. God speaks to us through David's experience and says, "**Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding.**"

3. (10-11) *The blessings of mercy and joy.*

**Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked;
But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him.**

**Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous;
And shout for joy, all *you* upright in heart!**

a. **Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him:**

David understood what it was to live (at least for a season) as **the wicked**, and the **sorrows** that came with it. The repentant David then had a renewed experience of the **mercy** of God surrounding him.

b. **Be glad in the Lord and rejoice:** This psalm gives repeated and compelling reasons for the believer to **be glad**, to **rejoice**, to **shout for joy**. The psalm appropriately ends with a call for God's people to remember and respond to those reasons.

- Remember the blessedness of forgiveness.
- Remember the redemption from guilt.
- Remember the release from the hypocrisy and stress of double-living.
- Remember the protection God gives His people.
- Remember the guidance of the LORD.

The Steadfast Love of the Lord

Psa 33:1 All you that are righteous, shout for joy for what the LORD has done; praise him, all you that obey him.

Psa 33:2 Give thanks to the LORD with harps, sing to him with stringed instruments.

Psa 33:3 Sing a new song to him, play the harp with skill, and shout for joy!

Psa 33:4 The words of the LORD are true, and all his works are dependable.

Psa 33:5 The LORD loves what is righteous and just; his constant love fills the earth.

Psa 33:6 The LORD created the heavens by his command, the sun, moon, and stars by his spoken word.

Psa 33:7 He gathered all the seas into one place; he shut up the ocean depths in storerooms.

Psa 33:8 Worship the LORD, all the earth! Honor him, all peoples of the world!

Psa 33:9 When he spoke, the world was created; at his command everything appeared.

Psa 33:10 The LORD frustrates the purposes of the nations; he keeps them from carrying out their plans.

Psa 33:11 But his plans endure forever; his purposes last eternally.

Psa 33:12 Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD; happy are the people he has chosen for his own!

Psa 33:13 The LORD looks down from heaven and sees all of us humans.

Psa 33:14 From where he rules, he looks down on all who live on earth.

Psa 33:15 He forms all their thoughts and knows everything they do.

Psa 33:16 A king does not win because of his powerful army; a soldier does not triumph because of his strength.

Psa 33:17 War horses are useless for victory; their great strength cannot save.

Psa 33:18 The LORD watches over those who obey him, those who trust in his constant love.

Psa 33:19 He saves them from death; he keeps them alive in times of famine.

Psa 33:20 We put our hope in the LORD; he is our protector and our help.

Psa 33:21 We are glad because of him; we trust in his holy name.

Psa 33:22 May your constant love be with us, LORD, as we put our hope in you.

Psalms 33:1-22

Psalms 33 – The Great and Awesome God

"If the purest form of a hymn is praise to God for what He is and does, this is a fine example." (Derek Kidner)

A. Praising the great God.

1. (1-3) A call to praise with songs and joy.

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!

For praise from the upright is beautiful.

Praise the LORD with the harp;

Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.

Sing to Him a new song;

Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

a. **Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous:** This unattributed psalm begins with a call for God's **righteous** to **rejoice** and **praise**. The psalmist primarily referred to those among God's people who walked rightly.

i. "Psalms 32 ended by calling on the righteous to sing praises to God. This note is picked up on in Psalms 33, almost as if its first three verses were written as an elaboration of Psa 32:11." (Boice)

ii. **Rejoice in the LORD:** "Calling upon the saints to be cheerful; and indeed there is hardly any duty more pressed in the Old and New Testament, or less practised." (Trapp)

iii. God's people are called to **rejoice in the LORD**, and in nothing else. "To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous, to rejoice in self is foolish, to rejoice in sin is fatal, but to rejoice in God is heavenly." (Spurgeon)

iv. Under the New Covenant we may extend this to those declared righteous through faith in Jesus (Rom 3:21-26). Those who are **righteous** by God's decree have an even greater responsibility to **rejoice** and **praise**.

b. **For praise from the upright is beautiful**: God regards worship from His people (both **upright** in a relative sense and declared to be **upright**) as **beautiful**. It pleases Him and creates the sense of appreciation for beauty. *God appreciates our praise.*

i. "It is apparently meant for liturgical use.... The opening summons to praise takes us far away from the solitary wrestlings and communings in former psalms." (Maclaren)

ii. "Take away the Christian's power of praising God, and you make him a poor earth-worm, bound here with doubts, and fears, and cares; but let him but kindle in his soul the flame that burns in heaven of seraphic love to God, and away he mounts." (Spurgeon)

iii. "An upright person is one without deception (Psa 32:2), full of integrity of heart, and the opposite of the perverse (Pro 8:8)." (VanGemeren)

iv. "Praise in the mouth of a sinner is like an oracle in the mouth of a fool; how uncomely is it for him to praise God, whose whole life is a dishonouring of God? It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God, who goes on in sinful practices, as it is for a usurer to talk

of living by faith, or for the devil to quote Scripture.”
(Watson, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody with an instrument of ten strings:** God also declared His satisfaction with worship through music and musical instruments. This can please God, the Creator of music and the Great Musician.

i. “Experts tell us that the *kinnor* [**harp**]...and *nebel* [**instrument of ten strings**]...were both stringed instruments, differing in the position of the sounding board, which was below in the former and above in the latter, and also in the covering of the strings.”
(Maclaren)

ii. The psalmist clearly exhorted God’s people to praise Him with the accompaniment of musical instruments. Strangely, some have thought that such musical accompaniment belonged only to the Old Covenant and not to the New.

iii. Spurgeon was one who preferred worship sung without musical instruments, but he would not command it. “We who do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity, do not affirm them to be unlawful, and if any George Herbert or Martin Luther can worship God better by the aid of well-tuned instruments, who shall gainsay their right? We do not need them, they would hinder than help our praise but if others are otherwise minded, are they not living in gospel liberty?” (Spurgeon)

iv. Nevertheless, the most important instrument is the *heart*. “Music, both vocal and instrumental, is of eminent use in setting forth the praises of God; but there is no instrument like the rational soul, and no melody like that of well-tuned affections.” (Horne)

d. **Sing to Him a new song:** God loves to receive the rejoicing and praise of His people expressed in **song**, especially the **new song**.

i. "‘New song’ simply means that every praise song should emerge from a fresh awareness of God’s grace." (Boice)

ii. "As God gives you fresh occasions, so do not content yourselves with the old songs or psalms, made by the holy men of God, but make new ones suited to the occasions." (Poole)

iii. "Put off oldness ye know the new song. A new man, a New Testament, a new song. A new song belongeth not to men that are old; none learn that but new men, renewed through grace from oldness, and belonging now to the New Testament, which is the kingdom of heaven." (Augustine, cited in Spurgeon)

e. **Play skillfully with a shout of joy:** Skillful musicianship and enthusiasm fitting for the **joy** of God’s people are other ways God is honored with praise.

i. **A shout of joy:** "Heartiness should be conspicuous in divine worship. Well-bred whispers are disreputable here. It is not that the Lord cannot hear us, but that it is natural for great exultation to express itself in the loudest manner. Men shout at the sight of their kings: shall we offer no loud hosannahs to the Son of David?" (Spurgeon)

ii. "Note the call in that verse for freshness and skill as well as fervour; three qualities rarely found together in religious music." (Kidner)

2. (4-5) *The greatness of God expressed in His character, who He is.*

**For the word of the LORD is right,
And all His work *is done* in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.**

a. **For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth:** The **truth** of God's word is a further reason for praise. In addition, God does His work in truth – not with deceit or manipulation.

i. "His *word* and His *work* are inseparable, for His words are never empty." (Kidner)

ii. "In all this we find the true secret of our confidence, and so of our joy. The word and the work of God are ever one. His word never returns to Him empty – it accomplishes that which He pleases." (Morgan)

b. **He loves righteousness and justice:** The psalmist kept thinking of the greatness of God's character – His love for **righteousness and justice** and His **goodness** spread all over the **earth**. The psalmist rightly rejoiced that Yahweh, the God who is really there, is not amoral or without goodness. He is what we who are made in His image would understand as "good."

i. "The Psalmist means that there is no spot in [**the earth**] where the traces and footprints of God's love may not be discerned, if only the eyes and the heart are opened." (Meyer)

ii. "The Lord's love (*hesed*) is evident in his works on earth. With respect to the rest of creation, he shows the same loyalty, constancy, and love that has found particular expression in the covenant relationship with his people." (VanGemeren)

iii. "He might, if he had pleased, have made everything we tasted bitter, everything we saw

loathsome, everything we touched a sting, every smell a stench, every sound a discord." (Paley, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "Earth might have been as full of terror as of grace, but instead thereof it teems and overflows with kindness.... If earth be full of mercy, what must heaven be where goodness concentrates its beams?" (Spurgeon)

3. (6-7) The greatness of God expressed in His creation.

**By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deep in storehouses.**

a. **By the word of the LORD the heavens were made:** The greatness of God goes beyond His moral goodness; He is also the God of all power and authority. By His mere **word** the universe was created.

i. "It is noteworthy that the occasions of the new song are very old acts, stretching back to the first creation and continued down through the ages." (Maclaren)

ii. "The world was created by the 'word' or fiat of God, which may be here described, after the manner of men, as formed by 'the breath of his mouth.'" (Horne)

b. **He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap:** The psalmist looked at the mighty oceans and understood that they reflected God's power and wisdom in creation.

i. "*In storehouses*; either in the clouds, or in the bowels of the earth, whence he can draw them forth when he sees fit." (Poole)

ii. "What is meant, however, here, is the separation of land and water at first, and possibly the continuance of the same power keeping them still apart, since the verbs in verse 7 are participles, which imply continued action." (Maclaren)

iii. "To speak of nature's obedient glory is to be reminded of man's blatant defiance." (Kidner)

4. (8-9) *A call for all the earth to fear the LORD.*

Let all the earth fear the LORD;

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

For He spoke, and it was *done*;

He commanded, and it stood fast.

a. **Let all the earth fear the LORD:** This is the logical response to recognizing a God who is perfect in both character and power. People should set themselves in a state of humble **awe** before Him.

i. "He who made all things, preserves all things, and can in a moment destroy all things, is the proper object of our 'fear'; and that we fear him so little, is a most convincing proof of the corruption and blindness of our hearts." (Horne)

b. **For He spoke, and it was done:** The psalmist again considered the *word* of God and its effective power. God never speaks empty words, they are full of active power to insure their fulfillment.

i. Luk 7:1-9 tells the story of a Roman centurion who so trusted Jesus that he believed, "**For He spoke, and it was done.**" Jesus praised the faith of that centurion.

B. The greatness of God among the nations.

1. (10-12) The greatness of God among the nations and His nation.

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;

He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.

The counsel of the LORD stands forever,

The plans of His heart to all generations.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,

The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

a. **The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing:** The psalmist has already praised God for His moral character and His creative power. Now he praised God for His active, guiding hand through human history. God moves among the Gentile **nations** as He pleases to accomplish His **counsel** and the **plans of His heart**.

i. "Their persecutions, slanders, falsehoods, are like puff-balls flung against a granite wall – they produce no result at all; for the Lord overrules the evil, and brings good out of it. The cause of God is never in danger: infernal craft is outwitted by infinite wisdom, and Satanic malice held in check by boundless power." (Spurgeon)

b. **Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD:** In considering the perfections of God, it shows the blessedness of the **nation** that will consciously align itself with God and His purposes.

i. "The nations feared many gods, each of whom ruled over the various heavenly bodies and over the sky, land, and sea.... Since the Lord made everything and rules sovereign over the whole universe, the nations should recognize that he alone is the Creator-Ruler." (VanGemeren)

ii. "O how happy is that nation which has *Jehovah* for its *Elohim*; the self-existent and eternal Lord for its covenant God; one who should unite himself to it by connections and ties the most powerful and endearing!" (Clarke)

c. **The people He has chosen as His own inheritance:** In a national sense this is Israel, the people and nation chosen for a unique place in the plan of God. In a broader sense it speaks of the blessing that belongs to all those chosen by the LORD, regarded as **His own inheritance.**

i. "So thrice happy is that people of Israel, who, though they be despised by the Gentiles, are chosen by this Almighty God, to be his peculiar portion, and friends, and servants." (Poole)

2. (13-15) *The greatness of God over each individual.*

**The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men.
From the place of His dwelling He looks
On all the inhabitants of the earth;
He fashions their hearts individually;
He considers all their works.**

a. **He sees all the sons of men:** God in all His perfections and plans for the nations and ages also has His eye on humanity as individuals. His greatness does not exclude His individual interest in **all the inhabitants of the earth.**

b. **He fashions their hearts individually:** God made us one by one, each with our own particular physical, mental, emotional makeup, including the allowance of our weaknesses and sinful inclinations. As our Maker He has the right of inspection, so **He considers all our works.**

3. (16-17) *The weakness of even the mighty among men.*

**No king is saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver *any* by its great strength.**

a. **No king is saved by the multitude of an army:** In considering the greatness of God and the extent of His reach, the psalmist understood that human effort *alone* does not determine events. God's work and plan in, and beyond, and sometimes instead of human effort, accomplish His purpose.

i. "All along the line of history this verse has been verified. The strongest battalions melt like snowflakes when God is against them." (Spurgeon)

b. **A horse is a vain hope for safety:** Horses were some of the most advanced military tools in that day. Because there is a God in heaven who governs the affairs and destiny of men, even the use of the most effective resources and technologies cannot in themselves determine the outcome.

i. "If the strength of horses be of God, or be his gift ([Job 39:19](#)), then trust not in the strength of horses: use the strength of horses, but do not trust the strength of horses." (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

4. (18-19) *The care of God for the individual.*

**Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy,
To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.**

a. **The eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him:** The psalmist continues to think both of God's hand in world-shaking events (such as the battles of kings), and His most minute care for the individual.

i. Jesus told us that God cares for the smallest of birds (Mat 10:29); surely He will care for those who honor Him, who are made in His image.

ii. "They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them." (Spurgeon)

b. **On those who hope in His mercy:** Those who truly **fear** the LORD find their **hope in His mercy**, not in their own goodness or righteousness.

i. **To deliver their soul:** "Freedom from troubles he promiseth not; but deliverance in due time he assureth them." (Trapp)

5. (20-22) *Resolution in light of God's greatness.*

**Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.
Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us,
Just as we hope in You.**

a. **Our soul waits for the LORD:** Having praised Him and considered God's greatness from many angles, it was appropriate to simply *wait* for the LORD – for His guidance, His word, His deliverance – looking to Him as **our help and shield**.

b. **For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name:** Earlier the psalmist called God's people to rejoice because of God's character and might. Now he calls us to praise God because of our blessed experience of trusting in **His holy name**.

i. **Our heart shall rejoice in him:** "Here is the fruit of our confidence: our souls are always *happy*, because we have taken God for our *portion*." (Clarke)

ii. **Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us:** “The hymn concludes with a prayer, requesting that God will refresh his people with his love (*hesed*).” (VanGemeren)

Taste and See That the Lord Is Good

Psa 34:1 I will always thank the LORD; I will never stop praising him.

Psa 34:2 I will praise him for what he has done; may all who are oppressed listen and be glad!

Psa 34:3 Proclaim with me the LORD's greatness; let us praise his name together!

Psa 34:4 I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me; he freed me from all my fears.

Psa 34:5 The oppressed look to him and are glad; they will never be disappointed.

Psa 34:6 The helpless call to him, and he answers; he saves them from all their troubles.

Psa 34:7 His angel guards those who honor the LORD and rescues them from danger.

Psa 34:8 Find out for yourself how good the LORD is. Happy are those who find safety with him.

Psa 34:9 Honor the LORD, all his people; those who obey him have all they need.

Psa 34:10 Even lions go hungry for lack of food, but those who obey the LORD lack nothing good.

Psa 34:11 Come, my young friends, and listen to me, and I will teach you to honor the LORD.

Psa 34:12 Would you like to enjoy life? Do you want long life and happiness?

Psa 34:13 Then keep from speaking evil and from telling lies.

Psa 34:14 Turn away from evil and do good; strive for peace with all your heart.

Psa 34:15 The LORD watches over the righteous and listens to their cries;

Psa 34:16 but he opposes those who do evil, so that when they die, they are soon forgotten.

Psa 34:17 The righteous call to the LORD, and he listens; he rescues them from all their troubles.

Psa 34:18 The LORD is near to those who are discouraged; he saves those who have lost all hope.

Psa 34:19 Good people suffer many troubles, but the LORD saves them from them all;

Psa 34:20 the LORD preserves them completely; not one of their bones is broken.

Psa 34:21 Evil will kill the wicked; those who hate the righteous will be punished.

Psa 34:22 The LORD will save his people; those who go to him for protection will be spared.

Psalms 34:1-22

Psalms 34 – Praise from the Cave

*This psalm is titled **A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.** A fugitive from Saul, David went to the Philistine city of Gath but found no refuge there and narrowly escaped. Those events are recorded in 1Sa 21:10 to 1Sa 22:1. Following that, David went to the cave at Adullam where many desperate men joined him. This joyful and wise psalm seems to have been written from that cave, and sung in the presence of those men.*

The structure of this psalm is an acrostic, or nearly so. Each verse begins with another letter of the Hebrew alphabet, except for the letter waw. The purpose of the acrostic format in this psalm mainly seems to be as a device used to encourage learning and memorization.

Abimelech was probably a title given to rulers among the Philistines; the ruler's proper name was Achish (1Sa 21:10).

A. Calling God's people to praise.

1. (1-2) *A life overflowing with praise.*

**I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.**

a. **I will bless the LORD at all times:** Given the title of this psalm and its historical setting, we see David triumphant and relieved at God's rescue when he was held by the Philistines (1Sa 21:10 to 1Sa 22:1).

i. "He may have acted like a fool, but he was not so foolish as to neglect praise of him who was his only true wisdom. He may have been hiding in a dismal cave, but this psalm tells us that in his heart he was hiding in the Lord." (Boice)

ii. **Praise shall continually be in my mouth:** "Not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too. Our thankfulness is not to be a silent thing; it should be one of the daughters of music." (Spurgeon)

b. **My soul shall make its boast in the LORD:** David might have boasted in himself. The 1 Samuel account describes how David cleverly won his freedom by pretending madness, but he knew that the working of the thing was due to God, not his own cleverness.

i. "What scope there is for holy boasting in Jehovah! His person, attributes, covenant, promises, works, and a thousand things besides, are all incomparable, unparalleled, matchless; we may cry them up as we please, but we shall never be convicted of vain and empty speech in so doing." (Spurgeon)

ii. Yet in a sense, David had little to **boast** of, from a human perspective. He had to humiliate himself like a madman to escape the Philistines, whom he had foolishly sought refuge among – even bringing Goliath’s sword with him to Gath!

iii. Therefore this is a humble **boast** of David, boasting in the LORD and even a bit in his own humiliation. “Paul, in his great passage on boasting, may have remembered this saying and this episode, and so recalled his own ignominious escape from another foreign king (2Co 11:30-33), and the lessons learned in such straits.” (Kidner)

iv. “The seeming idiot scribbling on the gate is now saint, poet, and preacher; and, looking back on the deliverance won by a trick, he thinks of it as an instance of Jehovah’s answer to prayer!” (Maclaren)

c. **The humble shall hear of it and be glad:** David won his freedom by a radical display of humility. Other **humble** people would be **glad** to hear how God blessed and rewarded David’s humility.

i. It’s significant that he calls the people of God in general **the humble**. It is as if being *proud* were a denial of God Himself – and in a sense, it is.

2. (3-7) *The testimony of the delivered one.*

**Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who**

**fear Him,
And delivers them.**

a. **Oh, magnify the LORD with me:** David knew there was something *magnetic* about the true praise of God. When one genuinely praises God, he or she wants to draw others into the practice of praise. If it is good for one to **exalt His name**, then it is even better to do it **together** with His people.

i. David thought praising God was to **magnify** Him – that is, to make Him larger in one's perception. Magnification does not actually make an object bigger, and we can't make God bigger. But to **magnify** something or someone is to *perceive* it as bigger, and we must do that regarding the LORD God.

ii. "As not sufficient to do a great work himself, he calleth in the help of others." (Trapp)

iii. "The Christian, not only himself magnifies God, but exhorts others to do likewise; and longs for that day to come, when all nations and languages, laying aside their contentions and animosities, their prejudices and their errors, their unbelief, their heresies, and their schisms, shall make their sound to be heard as one, in magnifying and exalting their great Redeemer's name." (Horne)

b. **I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears:** David's simple testimony is still powerful thousands of years later. David **sought the LORD** – looked to Him in loving trust. God then **heard** His servant, with the implication that He heard him with love, sympathy, and action. God responded when He **delivered** David from all his **fears**.

i. Commentators are divided regarding whether or not David sinned when he feigned madness among the

Philistines, or if he was obedient and guided by God. Morgan observed, "There does seem to be incongruity between David feigning madness to save his life, and this exalted outpouring of praise to God as the Great Deliverer."

ii. "Wherein, whether he sinned or not, is matter of dispute; but this is undoubted, that God's favour and his deliverance at that time was very remarkable, and deserved this solemn acknowledgment." (Poole)

iii. "Even when I was in the enemies' hands, and playing my pranks as a mad-man amongst them, I prayed secretly and inwardly." (Trapp)

iv. Even if David sinned in feigning madness, God **delivered** him and did not abandon him. "It is easy to understand how, in the quietness and solemnity of that cave of refuge, he recovered, and that with new power, his sense of the Divine care and wisdom and might and sufficiency. So he sang." (Morgan)

c. **They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed:** In moving from "**I**" to "**They**," David indicates that this experience was not his alone. Many others have known and will know what it is to set the focus of their loving trust upon God and receive His help.

i. **They looked to Him:** "The more we can think upon our Lord, and the less upon ourselves, the better. Looking to him, as he is seated upon the right hand of the throne of God, will keep our heads, and especially our hearts, steady when going through the deep waters of affliction." (Smith, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **And were radiant:** The idea is that they draw radiance from God's own glory. Later, the Apostle Paul would explain much the same thought: *But we*

all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2Co 3:18). This radiance is evidence that one has truly **looked to Him**.

iii. "*Radiant* is a word found again in Isa 60:5, where it describes a mother's face lighting up at the sight of her children, long given up for lost." (Kidner)

iv. **And their faces were not ashamed:** David also knew that God would never forsake the one who trusts in Him. God would give him confidence in the moment and vindication in time.

d. **This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him:** David again emphasized his *personal experience* of these truths. *He* was the one. *He* was the **poor man** who **cried out** to God, and God graciously answered.

- A cry is short, and not sweet.
- A cry is brief, and bitter.
- A cry is the language of pain.
- A cry is a natural production.
- A cry has much meaning and no music.

i. Acting the madman among the Philistines, David certainly was the **poor man**. "To get the force of David's words one has only to recall his peril and his abject clowning to save his life." (Kidner)

e. **The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him:** David narrowly escaped death among the Philistines. He was still a hunted, wanted man with King Saul determined to kill him. A rag-tag group of desperate losers gathered to him at Adullam. David was at a genuine low point; yet he was still filled with praise

and trust, even knowing that God had an angelic camp **all around** him.

i. The triumph and joy of this song is so clear that it is easy to forget the life context of the psalm. "It is for people who find themselves at the absolute low point in life, which is where David was. Or find themselves between a rock, which in this case was King Saul, and a hard place, which was King Achish. It is for you when everything seems against you." (Boice)

ii. David's protection was real, even if it was invisible. He could not see the angelic presence around him, but it was real. Many times in the Old Testament, the **angel of the LORD** was an actual material appearance of Yahweh Himself (as in Judges 13). We don't know if David meant an angelic being sent by God, or God Himself present with the believer. Both are true.

iii. "The fugitive, in his rude shelter in the cave of Adullam, thinks of Jacob, who, in his hour of defenceless need, was heartened by the vision of the angel encampment surrounding." (Maclaren)

iv. Psa 34:7 is one passage that gives support to the thought of a *guardian angel* for everyone, or perhaps at least for believers. One can't say that this passage *proves* the idea, but it is consistent with it. "Let the consideration of these invisible guardians, who are also spectators of our actions, at once restrain us from evil, and incite us to good." (Horne)

3. (8-10) *An invitation to share the joyful testimony.*

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;

Blessed is the man *who* trusts in Him!

Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints!

There is no want to those who fear Him.

**The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.**

a. **Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good:** After telling of his own experience, David challenged the reader (or singer) of this psalm to experience God's goodness for himself or herself. It could only come through a personal encounter, in some ways similar to a **taste** or to **see**.

i. **Taste** and sight are physical senses, ways in which we interact with the material world. In some ways, faith is like a spiritual sense, and with it we interact with the spiritual world. To **taste** and to **see** are like trusting God, loving Him, seeking Him, looking unto Him.

ii. "*Taste*, i.e. consider it seriously, and thoroughly, and affectionately; make trial of it by your own and others' experiences. This is opposed by those slight and vanishing thoughts which men have of it." (Poole)

iii. "As he that feels the fire hot, or as he that tasteth honey sweet, ye need not use arguments to persuade him to believe it; so here, let a man but once taste that the Lord is good, and he will thenceforth, as a new-born babe, desire the sincere milk of the word." (Trapp)

iv. "Both Heb 6:5 and 1Pe 2:3 use this verse to describe the first venture into faith, and to urge that the tasting should be more than a casual sampling." (Kidner)

v. "There are some things, especially in the depths of the religious life, which can only be understood by being experienced, and which even then are incapable of being adequately embodied in words. 'O *taste and*

see that the Lord is good.' The enjoyment must come before the illumination; or rather the enjoyment is the illumination." (Binney, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Blessed is the man who trusts in Him:** David was sure that the one who did **taste and see** – or, who trusted in God – would not be forsaken. God would make him **blessed**.

c. **Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints:** David thought that to **fear** the LORD was much like trusting Him and experiencing His goodness. This fear is the proper reverence and respect that man has for Deity. If you really experience God's goodness, if you really experience the blessedness of trusting Him, you will also have an appropriate fear of the LORD.

d. **Those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing:** Even one as strong as the **young lions** may **lack and suffer hunger**; but David testified of God's greater provision.

i. "The word 'lions' may be a metaphor for those who are strong, oppressive, and evil." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Were there lions prowling around the camp at Adullam, and did the psalmist take their growls as typical of all vain attempts to satisfy the soul?" (Maclaren)

iii. David experienced a **good thing** from God in his deliverance among the Philistines. He knew that the good thing was not due to his own strength or might; it was the goodness of God extended to **those who seek the LORD**.

iv. "Although God doth usually take a special care to supply the wants of good men, and hath oft done it by extraordinary ways, when ordinary have failed, yet sometimes he knows, and it is certainly true, that

wants and crosses are more needful and useful to them than bread, and in such cases it is a greater mercy of God to deny them supplies than to grant them." (Poole)

v. "Paul had nothing, and yet possessed all things." (Trapp)

B. Teaching the people of God.

1. (11-14) Living in the fear of the LORD.

**Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
Who *is* the man *who* desires life,
And loves *many* days, that he may see good?
Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.
Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.**

a. **Come, you children, listen to me:** Following David's deliverance from feigned madness among the Philistines, many who were in distress, in debt, or in discontent gathered to him at the cave at Adullam (1Sa 22:1-2). It's reasonable to think that David taught these men his own recent lessons of faith, including **the fear of the LORD**.

i. As David describes the **fear of the LORD**, it is rooted in action, not religious feelings. "David is saying that the fear of the Lord is doing right, that is, that it involves obedience." (Boice)

b. **Who is the man who desires life:** David taught his unusual group of followers what one must do to see God's blessing on his life – to live in **the fear of the LORD**.

• **Keep your tongue from evil:** David taught his men – rough as they were – that they should not speak evil.

- **And your lips from speaking deceit:** David taught them that a particular form of evil to avoid is that of lying and **deceit**.

- **Depart from evil and do good:** David spoke to his men about simply directing the life away **from evil** and toward **good**.

- **Seek peace and pursue it:** David taught his men to think not only in terms of war and battles, but in terms of **peace**, and the pursuit of it. Peace with God and among men should be sought.

c. **And loves many days, that he may see good:** David's instruction of his men at the cave at Adullam was very much in light of the Old Covenant, by which he and the rest of Israel related to God. Under the New Covenant, God's blessing is in Jesus Christ and received by faith, not only by our own obedience.

i. "To teach men how to live and how to die, is the aim of all useful religious instruction. The rewards of virtue are the baits with which the young are to be drawn to morality. While we teach piety to God we should also dwell much upon morality towards man."
(Spurgeon)

2. (15-16) *Living under the watchful eye of God.*

The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,

And His ears are open to their cry.

The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,

To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

a. **The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous:** David continued to instruct his men, teaching them about the watchful eye and attentive ear of God upon His people. This was another aspect of the reward for those who lived the obedience described in Psa 34:13-14.

b. **The face of the LORD is against those who do evil:** It was important for David's men to also know that – particularly under the Old Covenant – there were not only blessings for obedience, but curses for disobedience. Those stuck in their **evil** and rebellion could find their **remembrance gone from the earth.**

3. (17-18) *God, the helper of the humble.*

**The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles.
The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.**

a. **The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears:** David reminded his men at the cave at Adullam that God's attentive care is upon the **righteous**. David's testimony was that God had delivered him out of all his **troubles**.

b. **The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart:** This teaching from David was wonderful for the men at the cave at Adullam to hear. They – being in debt, distressed, and discontent – were likely those with **a broken heart** and **a contrite spirit**. They were objects of God's favor and salvation, not His scorn.

i. "Those whose spirits are oppressed, and even broken, with the greatness of their calamities.... Those whose hearts or spirits are truly and deeply humbled under the hand of God." (Poole)

ii. "A bird with a broken wing, an animal with a broken leg, a woman with a broken heart, a man with a broken purpose in life – these seem to drop out of the main current of life into shadow. They go apart to suffer and droop. The busy rush of life goes on without them. But God draws nigh." (Meyer)

iii. "Broken hearts think God is far away, when he is really most near to them; their eyes are holden so

that they see not their best friend. Indeed, he is with them, and in them, but they know it not." (Spurgeon)

iv. **A contrite spirit:** "The beaten-out spirit'...the *hammer* is necessarily implied; in breaking to pieces the ore first, and then plating out the metal when it has been separated from the ore." (Clarke)

4. (19-22) *God's care for His righteous ones.*

**Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.
He guards all his bones;
Not one of them is broken.
Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous shall be
condemned.
The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who trust in Him shall be
condemned.**

a. **Many are the afflictions of the righteous:** David spoke from his own experience to his men at the cave at Adullam. Though he was relatively young, he had still suffered many **afflictions**, even as a **righteous** man.

i. "Many are the afflictions,' but more are the deliverances." (Maclaren)

b. **But the LORD delivers him out of them all:** This was the principle that answered the previous statement. Indeed, the righteous had many afflictions; yet God's deliverance was real in David's life and still is real in the experience of many of God's people.

c. **He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken:** David could look at his own body and see that though he had endured many battles, accidents, and hardships – yet not one bone was **broken**.

i. According to the Gospel of John, David spoke not only of his own experience. He also spoke prophetically of the Messiah to come, Jesus Christ. John explained that the Roman soldiers who supervised the crucifixion of Jesus came to His body on the cross, expecting to hasten and guarantee His death in the traditional way – breaking the legs of the crucified victim. When they looked carefully, they learned that Jesus was already dead and they pierced His side to confirm it. John wrote, *for these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "Not one of His bones shall be broken"* (Joh 19:36).

ii. "Christ's bones were in themselves breakable, but could not actually be broken by all the violence in the world, because God had fore-decreed, *a bone of him shall not be broken.*" (Fuller, cited in Spurgeon)

d. **Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned:** David had confidence in more than the rescue of the righteous. He was also confident that the wicked and those who hate would be judged.

i. **Evil shall slay the wicked:** "Either, 1. The evil of sin. His own wickedness, though designed against others, shall destroy himself. Or, 2. The evil of misery. When the afflictions of good men shall have a happy issue, [the affliction of the wicked] shall end in their total and final destruction." (Poole)

e. **None of those who trust in Him shall be condemned:** David could proclaim that God would rescue **the soul of His servants**, and they would be found in a place outside God's condemnation.

i. Many centuries later the Apostle Paul would write, *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus* (Rom 8:1). Even under the Old

Covenant, David knew something of this freedom from condemnation.

Great Is the Lord

Psa 35:1 Oppose those who oppose me, LORD, and fight those who fight against me!

Psa 35:2 Take your shield and armor and come to my rescue.

Psa 35:3 Lift up your spear and war ax against those who pursue me. Promise that you will save me.

Psa 35:4 May those who try to kill me be defeated and disgraced! May those who plot against me be turned back and confused!

Psa 35:5 May they be like straw blown by the wind as the angel of the LORD pursues them!

Psa 35:6 May their path be dark and slippery while the angel of the LORD strikes them down!

Psa 35:7 Without any reason they laid a trap for me and dug a deep hole to catch me.

Psa 35:8 But destruction will catch them before they know it; they will be caught in their own trap and fall to their destruction!

Psa 35:9 Then I will be glad because of the LORD; I will be happy because he saved me.

Psa 35:10 With all my heart I will say to the LORD, "There is no one like you. You protect the weak from the strong, the poor from the oppressor."

Psa 35:11 Evil people testify against me and accuse me of crimes I know nothing about.

Psa 35:12 They pay me back evil for good, and I sink in despair.

Psa 35:13 But when they were sick, I dressed in mourning; I deprived myself of food; I prayed with my head bowed low,

Psa 35:14 as I would pray for a friend or a brother. I went around bent over in mourning, as one who mourns for his mother.

Psa 35:15 But when I was in trouble, they were all glad and gathered around to make fun of me; strangers beat me and kept striking me.

Psa 35:16 Like those who would mock a cripple, they glared at me with hate.

Psa 35:17 How much longer, Lord, will you just look on? Rescue me from their attacks; save my life from these lions!

Psa 35:18 Then I will thank you in the assembly of your people; I will praise you before them all.

Psa 35:19 Don't let my enemies, those liars, gloat over my defeat. Don't let those who hate me for no reason smirk with delight over my sorrow.

Psa 35:20 They do not speak in a friendly way; instead they invent all kinds of lies about peace-loving people.

Psa 35:21 They accuse me, shouting, "We saw what you did!"

Psa 35:22 But you, O LORD, have seen this. So don't be silent, Lord; don't keep yourself far away!

Psa 35:23 Rouse yourself, O Lord, and defend me; rise up, my God, and plead my cause.

Psa 35:24 You are righteous, O LORD, so declare me innocent; don't let my enemies gloat over me.

Psa 35:25 Don't let them say to themselves, "We are rid of him! That's just what we wanted!"

Psa 35:26 May those who gloat over my suffering be completely defeated and confused; may those who claim to be better than I am be covered with shame and disgrace.

Psa 35:27 May those who want to see me acquitted shout for joy and say again and again, "How great is the LORD! He

is pleased with the success of his servant."

Psa 35:28 Then I will proclaim your righteousness, and I will praise you all day long.

Psalms 35:1-28

Psalms 35 – "Awake to My Vindication"

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. This is one of what are commonly known as the Imprecatory Psalms, which in strong terms ask God to defeat and destroy the enemies of His people. As you read through the book of Psalms, the Imprecatory Psalms become more intense. Psalms 7 is perhaps the mildest, while some count at least 30 curses in Psalms 109.*

It is difficult to assign this psalm to any particular period of David's life. However, the phrasing of Psa 35:1 is similar to what David said to Saul in 1Sa 24:15, so it may be linked to the period of David's life when Saul pursued him.

A. David and his adversaries.

1. (1-3) David pleads to God for defense.

Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me;

Fight against those who fight against me.

Take hold of shield and buckler,

And stand up for my help.

Also draw out the spear,

And stop those who pursue me.

Say to my soul,

"I am your salvation."

a. **Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me:** Many adversaries fought against David, and many were the times he prayed, **"Fight against those who fight against me."** He could rightly pray this

prayer because he generally lived in God's will, and those who fought against him were opposed to God.

i. "The prayer in verse 1a uses the same word and metaphor as David does with his remonstrance with Saul (1Sa 24:15).\" (Maclaren)

ii. "The verb 'contend' [**strive**] is a legal term, frequently used among the prophets.\" (VanGemenen)

iii. "More literally, *litigate, O Lord, with them that litigate against me, contend against them that contend with me.*\" (Cresswell, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "Every saint of God shall have this privilege: the accuser of the brethren shall be met by the Advocate of the saints.\" (Spurgeon)

b. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help: With vivid images David called upon God to put on His armor and fight on David's behalf.

i. We often don't think of God having armor, but He does. Isa 59:17 says of the LORD: *For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.*

ii. "The Lord is likened to a warrior who contends on behalf of his own. He comes with a small shield (*magen*) and a 'buckler' (*sinnah*, a large, possibly rectangular shield often carried by a shield-bearer; cf. 1Sa 17:7; 1Sa 17:41), together with a 'spear and javelin.'\" (VanGemenen)

c. Also draw out the spear: A **shield** and a **buckler** are primarily defensive weapons, but David also called upon God to be on the offense for him. As David found protection behind God's **shield** and **buckler**, he also

asked God to keep his enemies at a distance with a **spear**.

i. "This armed Jehovah, grasping shield and drawing spear, utters no battle shout, but whispers consolation to the trembling man crouching behind his shield. The outward side of Divine activity, turned to the foe, is martial and menacing; the inner side is full of tender, secret breathings of comfort and love." (Maclaren)

ii. "Before the enemy comes to close quarters the Lord can push them off as with a long spear." (Spurgeon)

d. **Say to my soul, "I am your salvation"**: David needed to hear it again and again in his **soul** – that God was his salvation, and no one else. David was not his own salvation; God reminded his soul, **"I am your salvation."**

i. "So trying were the circumstances, so poignant the pain, that he was at least in danger of losing his assurance in God. Hence the plea that God would give him the inward sense of certainty: 'Say unto my soul – I am thy salvation.' It was a request for the renewing or strengthening of the inner communion with God, which is ever the secret of strength in days of turmoil and sorrow." (Morgan)

ii. "Brethren, there is nothing that can make you strong to labor for God, bold to fight against your enemies, and mighty to resist your temptations, like a full assurance that God is your God, and your sure salvation." (Spurgeon)

iii. This statement suggests many aspects of David's assurance.

- David had his doubts.

- David was not content when he had his doubts.
- David knew where to obtain full assurance.
- David's assurance had a divine source.
- David's assurance was deep and personal.
- David's assurance was present, not future.

2. (4-8) *David prays for the destruction of his enemies.*

**Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor
Who seek after my life;**

**Let those be turned back and brought to confusion
Who plot my hurt.**

Let them be like chaff before the wind,

And let the angel of the LORD chase *them*.

Let their way be dark and slippery,

And let the angel of the LORD pursue them.

**For without cause they have hidden their net for me
*in a pit,***

***Which* they have dug without cause for my life.**

Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly,

And let his net that he has hidden catch himself;

Into that very destruction let him fall.

a. **Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor who seek after my life:** David asked God to not only protect him, but also to vindicate him. He wanted it to be seen and known that he really did serve and obey God, and that those who opposed him were made **like chaff before the wind**.

i. "Viewing sinners as men, we love them and seek their good, but regarding them as enemies of God, we cannot think of them with anything but detestation, and a loyal desire for the confusion of their devices. No loyal subject can wish well to rebels. Squeamish sentimentality may object to the strong language

here used, but in their hearts all good men wish confusion to mischief-makers." (Spurgeon)

b. **Let the angel of the LORD chase them:** For emphasis, David prayed twice for the intervention of God's special messenger, **the angel of the LORD**.

i. Knowingly or not, David called upon God the Son for His help. "In my judgment this figure was a preincarnate manifestation of the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, which is why he is regularly called 'the LORD.'" (Boice)

ii. "*The angel of the Lord* is either our salvation or our doom; cf. Exo 23:20-22." (Kidner)

iii. "Chaff driven before the wind may rest against a wall; but where shall they rest who are chased by an angel?" (Trapp)

c. **Without cause they have hidden their net for me in a pit:** For emphasis, twice David asked God to note that his enemies came against him **without cause**.

i. It's easy to be too confident in one's own blamelessness, and many have repeated the sense of David's prayer without being blameless. Nevertheless David could rightly pray that those who came against him did so **without cause**.

ii. "*Without cause*, twice here, and again in 19, touches the very nerve of David's pain.... The psalms make us specially sensitive to the hurt of injustice." (Kidner)

iii. "Net-making and pit-digging require time and labour, and both of these the wicked will expend cheerfully if they may but overthrow the people of God." (Spurgeon)

d. **Let his net that he has hidden catch himself:** David prayed that the guilty one would truly be caught in his own trap – and the guilty one was his adversary. David prayed that **destruction** would come upon his adversary **unexpectedly**.

i. We can pray on the same principle against our spiritual adversaries, the principalities and powers that battle against us in the spiritual realm. The devil has snares (1Ti 3:7, 2Ti 2:26) and he has strategies (2Co 2:11) set against us. We may rightly pray that the devil is caught in and by his own snares and strategies.

3. (9-10) *Promised praise for anticipated deliverance.*

**And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD;
It shall rejoice in His salvation.
All my bones shall say,
“LORD, who is like You,
Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him,
Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?”**

a. **And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:** After pleading to God for deliverance and protection, David promised that his **soul** would be appropriately happy in the LORD.

i. “We do not triumph in the destruction of others, but in the salvation given to us of God.” (Spurgeon)

b. **All my bones shall say, “LORD, who is like You”:** David promised that his entire being would be given in honor to God, who delivers **the poor from him who is too strong for him**.

4. (11-14) *David’s previous care for his adversaries.*

**Fierce witnesses rise up;
They ask me *things* that I do not know.
They reward me evil for good,
To the sorrow of my soul.
But as for me, when they were sick,
My clothing was sackcloth;
I humbled myself with fasting;
And my prayer would return to my own heart.
I paced about as though *he were* my friend or
brother;
I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns *for his*
mother.**

a. **They reward me evil for good:** David remembered the dishonor of his enemies, who gave him **evil** when he gave them **good** – all **to the sorrow of his soul**.

i. "Causeless hatred is the lot of the good in this evil world. Their goodness is cause enough; for men's likes and dislikes follow their moral character."
(Maclaren)

ii. **They reward me evil for good:** "This was never more literally true of David, than it was of the holy Jesus, when, standing before Pontius Pilate, he received no other return from the Jews, for all the gracious words which he had spoken, and all the merciful works which he had done among them, than that of being slandered, and put to death." (Horne)

iii. **To the sorrow of my soul:** To be misunderstood or be made the deliberate target of false accusation is great sorrow. Smyth (cited in Spurgeon) suggested several reasons why God might allow such a sorrowful trial.

- To humble His people.
- To cause them to seek Him in urgent prayer.

- To prevent them from pursuing the very thing falsely accused of.
- To test whether His people will rely upon Him in all things.
- To teach them how to behave toward others when they are falsely accused.
- To warn them against making false accusations against others.

b. **When they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth:** David described some of the good that he did for his enemies. He showed remarkable love and concern for them

when they were sick, making their problems his own and caring for them **as though** they **were my friend or brother**.

5. (15-16) *How David's adversaries betrayed him.*

**But in my adversity they rejoiced
And gathered together;
Attackers gathered against me,
And I did not know *it*;
They tore *at me* and did not cease;
With ungodly mockers at feasts
They gnashed at me with their teeth.**

a. **But in my adversity they rejoiced:** David treated these enemies well in their adversity, but they were happy in David's time of crisis.

i. "This mobbing of one who has suddenly become vulnerable, whose goodness has put men to shame, was eagerly re-enacted at the trial of Jesus." (Kidner)

b. **Attackers gathered against me, and I did not know it:** The attacks from David's enemies were worse

because they were hidden from David and came upon him as a surprise.

6. (17-18) *Praise promised for prayed-for deliverance.*

Lord, how long will You look on?

Rescue me from their destructions,

My precious *life* from the lions.

I will give You thanks in the great assembly;

I will praise You among many people.

a. **Lord, how long will You look on?** David spoke honestly before God, admitting that he felt God was passive and indifferent. He begged God for **rescue** in his distress – which was so bad he felt **lions** were after him.

b. **I will give You thanks in the great assembly:** David vowed that he would give God the glory for His deliverance and do so publically.

B. The prayer for vindication.

1. (19-22) *Reasons for vindication before his enemies.*

Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies;

Nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause.

For they do not speak peace,

But they devise deceitful matters

Against *the* quiet ones in the land.

They also opened their mouth wide against me,

***And* said, “Aha, aha!**

Our eyes have seen *it*. ”

***This* You have seen, O LORD;**

Do not keep silence.

O Lord, do not be far from me.

a. **Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies:** David continued his prayer, asking God to vindicate him before his **enemies**.

i. “*Wink with their eye*, i.e. mock me, or insult over me, as the phrase signifies, Pro 6:13; Pro 10:10.” (Poole)

ii. **Who hate me without a cause**: “Jesus identified with those who suffer without apparent cause, because he applies the words of v. 19 (cf. 69:4) to himself (Joh 15:25).” (VanGemeren)

b. **They devise deceitful matters against the quiet ones in the land**: David prayed for vindication against his enemies because they plotted against God’s humble, simple people.

i. The German Lutheran Bible translated the phrase **the quiet ones in the land** as *die Stillen im Lande*. It later became a phrase to describe believers in Germany, especially those from the Pietistic tradition. They emphasized living a quiet, devoted life of peace before God and man, and trusting in God to defend them.

ii. “In every age God has had his quiet ones. Retired from its noise and strife, withdrawn from its ambitions and jealousies, unshaken by its alarms; because they had entered into the secret of a life hidden in God.” (Meyer)

iii. “When men rage about thee, go and tell Jesus. When storms are high, hide thee in his secret place. When others compete for fame and applause, and their passion might infect thee, get into thy closet, and shut thy door, and quiet thyself as a weaned babe.” (Meyer)

c. **This You have seen, O LORD.... O Lord, do not be far from me**: David continued his plea to God, using two different names for God in the Hebrew text – two

different names that are often translated in English by one word.

- **LORD**, with small capital letters, translates the Hebrew word *Yahweh* – the covenant name of God.

- **Lord**, with regular letters, translates the Hebrew word *Adonai* – the ancient Hebrew word for *Lord*. Sometimes *adonai* has the sense of *Sir* and sometimes it has the sense of *God*.

i. **This You have seen, O LORD**: “God has seen the facts of the case, and these include not only David’s innocence, but also that he is being falsely accused and slandered.” (Boice)

ii. **This You have seen, O LORD**: “*Thou hast seen* is a perfect foil to the enemy’s cry, ‘our eyes have seen it!’” (Kidner)

2. (23-26) *The plea for Divine vindication.*

Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication,

To my cause, my God and my Lord.

Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness;

And let them not rejoice over me.

Let them not say in their hearts, “Ah, so we would have it!”

Let them not say, “We have swallowed him up.”

Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion

Who rejoice at my hurt;

Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor

Who exalt themselves against me.

a. **Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication**: David was confident that he was on God’s side in his contention with his enemies, yet he longed for God to actively vindicate him. It seemed that God was too

passive, so David cried out for Him to **stir up Yourself** and to **awake** on David's behalf.

b. **My God and my Lord:** Here David used another word in the Hebrew vocabulary for God, the word *Elohim* – commonly translated as **God**. This is the plural for the generic word for God.

i. **My God and my Lord:** "The cry of Thomas when he saw the wounds of Jesus. If he did not count our Lord to be divine, neither does David here ascribe Deity to Jehovah, for there is no difference except in the order of the words and the tongue in which they were spoken; the meaning is identical." (Spurgeon)

c. **Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who rejoice at my hurt:** David simply and powerfully asked God to be his defense before his enemies.

i. **Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor:** "He will shame them for shaming his people, bring them to confusion for making confusion, pull off their fine apparel and give them a beggarly suit of dishonour, and turn all their rejoicing into weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Truly, the saints can afford to wait." (Spurgeon)

3. (27-28) *Asking that the people of God take joy in David's vindication.*

**Let them shout for joy and be glad,
Who favor my righteous cause;
And let them say continually,
"Let the LORD be magnified,
Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant."
And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness
And of Your praise all the day long.**

a. **Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause:** Through the psalms in general, we see that David did not think of himself as perfect in a sinless sense. Yet in many of the disputes with his enemies, he had no problem seeing that he was on God's side and they were not. In many of these conflicts, we don't sense that David was troubled by self-doubt.

i. "The enemy's fall is the occasion of glad praise, not because his intended victim yields to the temptation to take malicious delight in his calamity (*Schadenfreude*). His own deliverance, not the other's destruction, makes the singer joyful in Jehovah." (Maclaren)

b. **Let the LORD be magnified:** David spoke much of his own need and trouble in this psalm. Yet he ended with a strong focus on God and His praise. He thought of the people of God enlarging the LORD in their hearts and minds, and of his continual praise to God (**my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long**).

i. "Mine enemies' great design is *to magnify themselves*, verse 26, but my chief desire is that God may be magnified." (Poole)

How Precious Is Your Steadfast Love

Psa 36:1 Sin speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts; they reject God and do not have reverence for him.

Psa 36:2 Because they think so highly of themselves, they think that God will not discover their sin and condemn it.

Psa 36:3 Their speech is wicked and full of lies; they no longer do what is wise and good.

Psa 36:4 They make evil plans as they lie in bed; nothing they do is good, and they never reject anything evil.

Psa 36:5 LORD, your constant love reaches the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the skies.

Psa 36:6 Your righteousness is towering like the mountains; your justice is like the depths of the sea. People and animals are in your care.

Psa 36:7 How precious, O God, is your constant love! We find protection under the shadow of your wings.

Psa 36:8 We feast on the abundant food you provide; you let us drink from the river of your goodness.

Psa 36:9 You are the source of all life, and because of your light we see the light.

Psa 36:10 Continue to love those who know you and to do good to those who are righteous.

Psa 36:11 Do not let proud people attack me or the wicked make me run away.

Psa 36:12 See where evil people have fallen. There they lie, unable to rise.

Psalms 36:1-12

Psalms 36 – Mercy to the Heavens

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD**. Only Psalms 18 also uses the phrase **the servant of the LORD** in the title, and John Trapp observed that Psalms 18 comes from David's old age, and Psalms 36 comes from a younger David. From youth to old age, he was **David the servant of the LORD** and "He took more pleasure in the names of duty than of dignity." (John Trapp)*

A. A contrast between the wicked man and the righteous God.

1. (1-4) The wicked man.

An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked:

***There is no fear of God before his eyes.
For he flatters himself in his own eyes,
When he finds out his iniquity and when he hates.
The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit;
He has ceased to be wise and to do good.
He devises wickedness on his bed;
He sets himself in a way that is not good;
He does not abhor evil.***

a. **An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked:** The sense in the original is that this is literally *an oracle of transgression*, as if David were divinely taught by the sins of others.

i. The same Hebrew word (*neum*) is used in many places describing an utterance from God (such as in the phrase *says the LORD* in Gen 22:16 and Num 14:28). It is used to describe an oracle of David in 2Sa 23:1 (*thus says David the son of Jesse*). The use in Psa 36:1 is interesting: it is “thus says transgression” or *an oracle of transgression*.

ii. “Men’s sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil.” (Spurgeon)

iii. There is a secondary way to understand this: that the **oracle of transgression** is that which speaks in the heart of the sinner himself. “We have then a bold personification of ‘Transgression’ as speaking in the secret heart of the wicked, as in some dark cave, such as heathen oracle-mongers haunted.... This is the account of how men come to do evil: that there is a voice within whispering falsehood.” (Maclaren)

b. **There is no fear of God before his eyes:** This may be obvious but is often forgotten. The foundation of the **wicked** man’s character and deeds is a lack of the **fear of God**. He does not respect or reverence God as he should.

i. "It is likely that Paul had this psalm in mind as he composed the opening chapters of his great letter, since he quotes verse 1 in Rom 3:18." (Boice)

ii. "The description of the evil man is graphic. He has by some means persuaded himself that God does not interfere with men. Consequently he has no fear of God, enthrones himself at the centre of his own being, and goes in the way of wickedness in thought and in action." (Morgan)

c. **He flatters himself in his own eyes:** The wicked man lowers his estimation of God and raises his estimation of himself. He thinks of himself much more highly than he should both in regard to his sins (**his iniquity**) and his prejudices (**hates**).

i. The essence of flattery is found in *words that say one is better than he or she actually is*. We usually think of flattery as coming from others, but we are entirely able to tell ourselves that we are better than we actually are.

ii. Matthew Poole described several ways one may flatter oneself in regard to sin:

- That his sins "are not sins, which a mind bribed by passion and interest can easily believe."
- That his sins "are but small and venial sins."
- That his sins "will be excused, if not justified by honest intentions, or by outward professions and exercise of religion, or by some good actions, wherewith he thinks to make some compensation for them or some other way."

iii. "He had not God before his eyes in holy awe, therefore he puts himself there in unholy admiration. He who makes little of God makes much of himself. They who forget adoration fall into adulation. The

eyes must see something, and if they admire not God they will flatter self." (Spurgeon)

iv. **When he finds out his iniquity:** "He vainly thinks his crimes may be concealed, or disguised, till a discovery breaks the charm, and disperses the delusion." (Horne)

v. "Until God by some dreadful judgment undeceive him." (Poole)

vi. **He flatters himself** when the sin is discovered. "To smooth over one's own conduct to one's conscience (which is the meaning of the Hebrew) is to smooth one's own path to hell." (Spurgeon)

d. **He has ceased to be wise and to do good:** The character of the wicked man is shown in his words (which are **wickedness and deceit**), in his plans (**he devises wickedness**), in his habits (**sets himself in a way that is not good**), and in his attractions (**he does not abhor evil**).

i. **Iniquity and deceit:** "This pair of hell dogs generally hunt together, and what one does not catch the other will; if iniquity cannot win by oppression, deceit will gain by chicanery." (Spurgeon)

ii. **He devises wickedness on his bed:** "Which notes that he doth it, 1. Constantly and unweariedly, preferring it before his own rest. 2. Earnestly and seriously, when his mind is freed from all outward distractions, and wholly at leisure to attend that business about which it is employed, compare Psa 4:4. 3. Freely, from his own inclination, when none are present to provoke him to it." (Poole)

iii. "The evil person is not merely drifting into evil ways. He is inventing ways to do it, in contrast to the godly who spent the wakeful hours of the night

meditating on God and his commandments [as in Psa 1:2; Psa 63:6]." (Boice)

iv. **On his bed...in a way**: "The phrase 'on his bed' is parallel with 'on the way'. The ungodly considers evil both in his lying down and in his walking." (VanGemeren)

v. **He sets himself in a way that is not good**: "And there meaneth to keep him, as the word importeth; set he is, and he will not be removed, being every whit as good as ever he meaneth to be." (Trapp)

vi. **He does not abhor evil**: "So far from having a contempt and abhorrence for evil, he even rejoices in it, and patronises it. He never hates a wrong thing because it is wrong, but he meditates on it, defends it, and practises it." (Spurgeon)

vii. Sin is found in what we don't do as well as in what we do. "A striking note in this description is the prominence of negative sins among the positive ones: *viz. ceased...not good...spurns not.*" (Kidner)

2. (5-6) *The good and righteous God.*

Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens;

Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the great mountains;

Your judgments are a great deep;

O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

a. **Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens**: We sense that David has thought long enough about the wicked man. Now he turns to the great **mercy** and **faithfulness** of Yahweh (the **LORD**), the covenant God of Israel.

i. The translation of **mercy** here is inconsistent, for the same Hebrew word *hesed* is translated as *lovingkindness* in both Psa 36:7; Psa 36:10. This

wonderful word speaks of God's love and mercy, especially to His covenant people.

ii. "The most important of the attributes from the perspective of this psalm is *hesed*, usually translated 'unfailing love' or 'lovingkindness.'" (Boice)

iii. "One can easily imagine that the psalm was written on some natural height from which the singer looked out on a far-stretching scene in which he saw symbols of truth concerning his God. Note the sweep of vision: the heavens, the skies or clouds, the mountains, the great deep, the river, and over all, the light." (Morgan)

iv. **Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens:** "Like the ethereal blue, it encompasses the whole earth, smiling upon universal nature, acting as a canopy for all the creatures of earth, surmounting the loftiest peaks of human provocations, and rising high above the mists of mortal transgression." (Spurgeon)

b. **Mercy...faithfulness...righteousness...judgments:** David can only describe these attributes of God with the biggest things he can think of – the **heavens**, the **clouds** that fill the sky, the **great mountains**, and the **great deep** of the sea.

i. **Reaches to the clouds:** Hebrew, "*ad shechakim*, to the eternal regions; above all visible space." (Clarke)

ii. **Great mountains:** In Hebrew, "mountains of God.... David, that is, after the manner of the Hebrew tongue, which, when it would magnify anything, addeth the name of God." (Trapp)

c. **O LORD, You preserve man and beast:** The goodness of God is shown in the way He cares for His creatures. The ecosystem of His creation has enough to

provide for the needs of those He has created, both **man and beast**.

B. Looking to the God of mercy for help against wicked men.

1. (7-9) Thanks for the goodness of God toward His people.

How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!

Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,

And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.

For with You is the fountain of life;

In Your light we see light.

a. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God:

Considering the care of God for His people and His creation, David felt the mercy of God to be a **precious** and personal thing.

i. "The word *precious* establishes at once the change of scale from the immense to the intimate and personal." (Kidner)

ii. The repeated use of the word **lovingkindness** is instructive. It "needs both emphases: that of verse 5 as too great to grasp, and of verse 7 as too good to let slip." (Kidner)

b. Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings:

The merciful God is a place of rest and protection for the people of God. God invites *all* among **the children of men** to find this refuge of trust in Him.

i. There are two main ways that commentators understand the figure **shadow of Your wings**. Some take it to mean the wings of the cherubim

represented in His tabernacle and the later temple. Cherubim wings were depicted on the lid of the ark of the covenant, which was the representation of God's throne. Others take it in the sense that a hen covers her young chicks under her wings to protect, hide, and shelter them.

ii. "These...are the *two wings* of the Divine goodness, under which the children of men take refuge. The allusion may be to the

wings of the cherubim, above the mercy-seat." (Clarke)

iii. "As chickens in a storm, or when the puttock threateneth, hover and cover under the hen." (Trapp)

iv. "The picture of taking *refuge in the shadow of thy wings* was used of Ruth by Boaz (Rth 2:12), and of Jerusalem by Jesus (Mat 23:37); it shows an aspect of salvation which is as humbling as it is reassuring." (Kidner)

c. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house: God cares for and protects those who trust in Him as a gracious and honorable host would for anyone in his **house**. The **fullness** of God's house is enough to satisfy anyone, offering a virtual **river of...pleasures** in Him.

i. **They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house:** The word **fullness** here is literally *fatness*, and its use is suggestive. "The fattest is esteemed the fairest and the most excellent food; therefore the saint was enjoined to offer the fat in sacrifice under the law. As God expects the best from us, so he gives the best to us." (Swinnock, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **The fullness of Your house:** Spurgeon cited a story by Arnot regarding a man who moved his family to a much larger and better equipped home. His young son kept running through the house yelling, "Is this ours, father? And is this ours?" Arnot observed: "The child did not say [Is this] 'yours;' and I observed that the father while he told the story was not offended with the freedom. You could read in his glistening eye that the infant's confidence in appropriating as his own all that his father had, was an important element in his satisfaction." This will be one of our great joys in heaven when we come to our Father's house. With unmeasured satisfaction we will have the right to roam heaven and say, "Is this ours? And is this ours?" and say it unto eternity.

iii. **The river of Your pleasures:** "Union with Him is the source of all delight, as of all true fruition of desires. Possibly a reference to Eden may be intended in the selection of the word for 'pleasures,' which is a cognate with that name." (Maclaren)

iv. **The river of Your pleasures:** "Some drops from the celestial cup are sufficient, for a time, to make us forget our sorrows, even while we are in the midst of them. What then may we not expect from full draughts of those pleasures which are at thy right hand, O Lord, for evermore?" (Horne)

v. "Augustine tells us that one day, when he was about to write something upon the eighth verse of the thirty-sixth Psalm, '*Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,*' and being almost swallowed up with the contemplation of heavenly joys." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

vi. "The psalmist's conception of religion is essentially joyful. No doubt there are sources of sadness peculiar

to a religious man, and he is necessarily shut out from much of the effervescent poison of earthly joys drugged with sin. Much in his life is inevitably grave, stern, and sad. But the sources of joy opened are far deeper than those that are closed." (Maclaren)

d. **With You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light:** The satisfaction and **pleasures** found in God are connected to **life** and **light**. They heal and build, giving **life**; they are full of the **light** of truth and goodness.

i. A **fountain** speaks of "1. Causality. It is in God as in a fountain, and from him is derived to us. 2. Abundance. 3. Excellency. Water is sweetest in the fountain." (Poole)

ii. "Of all the abundant and varying life, He is the Source or Fountain, and the sunshine of His face is the light on everything." (Morgan)

iii. **In Your light we see light:** "'Tis but a kind of dim twilight comparatively, which we enjoy here in this world. While we are hid in this prison-house we can see but little; but our Father's house above is full of light." (Cruso, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. **In Your light we see light** is similar in thought to what John wrote in the opening words of his Gospel: *Jesus was the true Light which gives light to every man (Joh 1:9)*. "It is hard to doubt that John was thinking of Psa 36:9 as he composed the prelude." (Boice)

2. (10-12) *Prayer for continued blessing and protection.*

Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,

And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.

Let not the foot of pride come against me,

**And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.
There the workers of iniquity have fallen;
They have been cast down and are not able to rise.**

a. **Continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You:** Having *received* the good mercy and **righteousness** of God, David rightly prays that it would **continue** for himself and all those who know God in right relationship.

i. **Continue Your lovingkindness:** "The Hebrew is, *draw forth*, or draw out thy lovingkindness: a metaphor either taken from vessels of wine, which being set abroach once, yield not only one cup, but many cups; so when God setteth abroach the wine of his mercy, he will not fill your cup once, but twice and seven times." (Greenhill, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "Learn from this verse, that although a continuance of mercy is guaranteed in the covenant, we are yet to make it a matter of prayer." (Spurgeon)

iii. We note the parallelism between **those who know You** and **the upright in heart**. David naturally thought that those who genuinely knew God would be **upright in heart**.

b. **Let not the foot of pride come against me:** David earlier praised God as the one who protects and blesses His people (Psa 36:7). Now David prayed that God would fulfill this aspect of His character, protecting His servant against both the **foot** and the **hand of the wicked**.

c. **There the workers of iniquity have fallen:** David considered the end of the wicked men that he thought of at the beginning of this psalm. They are **fallen**, and so much so that they **are not able to rise**. Unlike the righteous who may fall seven times yet rise up again

(Pro 24:16), the **workers of iniquity** remain in the dust as God protects His servants.

i. "From his serene shelter under the wing, the suppliant looks out on the rout of baffled foes, and sees the end which gives the lie to the oracle of transgression and its flatteries. 'They are struck down,' the same word as in the picture of the pursuing angel of the Lord in Psalms 35." (Maclaren)

ii. There is some emphasis on the word **there** in this phrase. Some think it refers to the **pride** mentioned in the previous verse, and others to the place where the **workers of iniquity** practiced their sin.

iii. "THERE, has been applied by many of the fathers to the *pride* spoken of in the preceding verse. *There*, in or by pride, says *Augustine*, do all sinners perish." (Clarke)

iv. "*There*, where they come against me, and hope to ruin me. He seems as it were to point to the place with his finger." (Poole)

v. "There, where they plotted or practised the downfall of the righteous; as Henry III of France was stabbed in the same chamber where he and others had contrived the Parisian massacre." (Trapp)

He Will Not Forsake His Saints

Psa 37:1 Don't be worried on account of the wicked; don't be jealous of those who do wrong.

Psa 37:2 They will soon disappear like grass that dries up; they will die like plants that wither.

Psa 37:3 Trust in the LORD and do good; live in the land and be safe.

Psa 37:4 Seek your happiness in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desire.

Psa 37:5 Give yourself to the LORD; trust in him, and he will help you;

Psa 37:6 he will make your righteousness shine like the noonday sun.

Psa 37:7 Be patient and wait for the LORD to act; don't be worried about those who prosper or those who succeed in their evil plans.

Psa 37:8 Don't give in to worry or anger; it only leads to trouble.

Psa 37:9 Those who trust in the LORD will possess the land, but the wicked will be driven out.

Psa 37:10 Soon the wicked will disappear; you may look for them, but you won't find them;

Psa 37:11 but the humble will possess the land and enjoy prosperity and peace.

Psa 37:12 The wicked plot against good people and glare at them with hate.

Psa 37:13 But the Lord laughs at wicked people, because he knows they will soon be destroyed.

Psa 37:14 The wicked draw their swords and bend their bows to kill the poor and needy, to slaughter those who do what is right;

Psa 37:15 but they will be killed by their own swords, and their bows will be smashed.

Psa 37:16 The little that a good person owns is worth more than the wealth of all the wicked,

Psa 37:17 because the LORD will take away the strength of the wicked, but protect those who are good.

Psa 37:18 The LORD takes care of those who obey him, and the land will be theirs forever.

Psa 37:19 They will not suffer when times are bad; they will have enough in time of famine.

Psa 37:20 But the wicked will die; the enemies of the LORD will vanish like wild flowers; they will disappear like smoke.

Psa 37:21 The wicked borrow and never pay back, but good people are generous with their gifts.

Psa 37:22 Those who are blessed by the LORD will possess the land, but those who are cursed by him will be driven out.

Psa 37:23 The LORD guides us in the way we should go and protects those who please him.

Psa 37:24 If they fall, they will not stay down, because the LORD will help them up.

Psa 37:25 I am old now; I have lived a long time, but I have never seen good people abandoned by the LORD or their children begging for food.

Psa 37:26 At all times they give freely and lend to others, and their children are a blessing.

Psa 37:27 Turn away from evil and do good, and your descendants will always live in the land;

Psa 37:28 for the LORD loves what is right and does not abandon his faithful people. He protects them forever, but the descendants of the wicked will be driven out.

Psa 37:29 The righteous will possess the land and live in it forever.

Psa 37:30 The words of good people are wise, and they are always fair.

Psa 37:31 They keep the law of their God in their hearts and never depart from it.

Psa 37:32 Wicked people watch good people and try to kill them;

Psa 37:33 but the LORD will not abandon them to their enemy's power or let them be condemned when they are on trial.

Psa 37:34 Put your hope in the LORD and obey his commands; he will honor you by giving you the land, and you will see the wicked driven out.

Psa 37:35 I once knew someone wicked who was a tyrant; he towered over everyone like a cedar of Lebanon;

Psa 37:36 but later I passed by, and he wasn't there; I looked for him, but couldn't find him.

Psa 37:37 Notice good people, observe the righteous; peaceful people have descendants,

Psa 37:38 but sinners are completely destroyed, and their descendants are wiped out.

Psa 37:39 The LORD saves the righteous and protects them in times of trouble.

Psa 37:40 He helps them and rescues them; he saves them from the wicked, because they go to him for protection.

Psalms 37:1-40

Psalms 37 – Wisdom Over Worry

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. Verse 25 tells us that it is David in his older years, giving wisdom in the pattern of a song. This psalm is roughly acrostic in arrangement, with the lines arranged with Hebrew sentences that begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In style this is a wisdom psalm, directed not to God but to man, teaching after the manner of the Book of Proverbs.*

A. Counsel for the afflicted people of God.

1. (1-2) Don't worry about the ungodly.

**Do not fret because of evildoers,
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.
For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.**

a. **Do not fret because of evildoers:** It is a common thing for the righteous to **fret** or **be envious** of the wicked. Asaph was bothered by this problem in Psalms 73, wondering why the wicked often experienced so much prosperity.

i. "The words 'do not fret' literally mean 'do not get heated,' which is also how we might express it. Or we might say, 'Don't get all worked up.' Or even, 'Be cool.'" (Boice)

ii. "To fret is to worry, to have the heart-burn, to fume, to become vexed. Nature is very apt to kindle a fire of jealousy when it sees law-breakers riding on horses, and obedient subjects walking in the mire." (Spurgeon)

iii. Morgan wrote of this worry, this **fret**: "It is wrong; it is harmful; it is needless. Let the trusting wait. Events will justify the action."

iv. "It is as foolish as it is wicked to repine or be envious at the prosperity of others. Whether they are godly or ungodly, it is God who is the dispenser of the *bounty* they enjoy; and, most assuredly, he has a right to do what he will with his own. To be envious in such a case, is to arraign the providence of God." (Clarke)

b. **They shall soon be cut down like the grass:** David gives the same answer Asaph came to in Psalms 73, understanding that any prosperity experienced by the **workers of iniquity** was only temporary. Grass is green for a season, and so is the **herb** – but they both **wither** quickly.

i. "In the Middle East the lush spring vegetation may lose its beauty in a few days after a hot, dry desert wind (*hamsin*) has parched the land." (VanGemeren)

ii. We think of a wicked man eating a magnificent dinner while a godly man goes hungry. The wicked man eats anything and everything he wants, and his table is loaded as he enjoys his meal. Then we see the bigger picture: he eats his last meal on death row and in a moment will face terrible judgment. *Now*, with larger perspective, the godly man doesn't envy or worry about the wicked man. "Evil men instead of being envied, are to be viewed with horror and aversion; yet their loaded tables, and gilded trappings, are too apt to fascinate our poor half-opened eyes." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The test is found in Time. All the apparent prosperity of the wicked is transient; it passes and perishes, as do the wicked themselves." (Morgan)

2. (3-4) Put your trust and delight in the LORD.

**Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.**

a. **Trust in the LORD, and do good:** Instead of worrying and envying, David counseled the man or woman of God to simply **trust** God and **do good** for His glory. It is remarkable how quickly we can get distracted from the simple work of trusting God and doing good. Looking at the seeming prosperity of the wicked is one way we are often distracted.

i. "Faith cures fretting. Sight is cross-eyed, and views things only as they seem, hence her envy; faith has clearer optics to behold things as they really are, hence her peace." (Spurgeon)

b. **Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness:** David also counseled the man or woman of God to leave

aside worry and envy by simply enjoying the blessings God gives. He provided Israel a **land** to enjoy, and His **faithfulness** was like food for them every day.

c. **Delight yourself also in the LORD:** David advised the man or woman of God to replace worry and envy with a conscious **delight** in the LORD. This means to cheer one's heart and mind by considering and by faith receiving the multiple blessings of God.

i. **Delight yourself:** Several writers explain and apply this idea.

- "Expect all thy happiness *from* him, and seek it *in* him." (Clarke)
- "It includes a deliberate redirection of one's emotions...[such as] Paul and Silas in prison, singing as well as praying." (Kidner)
- "We cannot delight thus without effort. We must withdraw our eager desires from the things of earth, fastening and fixing them on Him." (Meyer)
- "In a certain sense imitate the wicked; they delight in their portion – take care to delight in yours, and so far from envying you will pity them." (Spurgeon)
- "The reason many apparent Christians do not delight in God is that they do not know him very well, and the reason they do not know him very well is that they do not spend time with him." (Boice)

ii. "Do not think first of the desires of thy heart, but think first of delighting thyself in thy God. If thou hast accepted him as thy Lord, he is thine; so delight in him, and then he will give thee the desires of thy heart." (Spurgeon)

iii. We notice that David wrote **delight yourself also in the LORD**. The word **also** is important, reminding

us that there are legitimate joys and pleasures in life outside the life of the spirit. The believer who truly trusts God has the capability to **also** find true **delight** in **the LORD**.

iv. "Again, *he delights in you*; I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, 'His delights were with the sons of men,' Pro 8:31. Think what he is, and what you are; and at once, both wonder and yield." (Howe, cited in Spurgeon)

d. And He shall give you the desires of your heart:

This is a wonderful and even safe promise. The one who truly **delights** in the LORD will find his heart and desires changed, steadily aligning with God's own good desires for his life. Thus we see that finding delight in God is *a key to a happy, satisfied life*.

i. This shows that God intends to fulfill the heart desires of the redeemed man or woman of God. To be sure, it is possible for such desires to be clouded by sin or selfishness; yet even when so clouded there is almost always a godly root to the desire that is entirely in the will of God. The man or woman of God should find his or her rest in this, and leave aside worry and envy.

ii. "They said of Martin Luther as he walked the streets, 'There comes a man that can have anything of God he likes.' You ask the reason of it. Because Luther delighted himself in his God." (Spurgeon)

iii. The principle of Psa 37:4 is the foundation for a principle sometimes called *Christian Hedonism*. Normally, we think of hedonism as the idolatry of pleasure. The term *Christian Hedonism* has been used to describe a righteous pursuit of satisfaction and

pleasure, one that is rooted in a delighted focus upon God.

iv. Most of all, it shows that when we **delight** ourselves **in the LORD**, He gives us our delight. If He is our delight, He gives us more of Himself. "Longings fixed on Him fulfill themselves." (Maclaren)

3. (5-6) *Trust God to protect and promote you.*

**Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring *it* to pass.
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.**

a. **Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him:** Here David explained what it means to delight one's self in the LORD, as described in the previous verse. It means to **commit** one's way to Him and to truly **trust** in the LORD. It means to find peace, protection, and satisfaction in a surrendered focus upon God.

i. **Commit your way:** "The Hebrew for *commit* is literally 'roll', as though getting rid of a burden (*cf.* Jos 5:9). But it comes to be used simply as a synonym for 'entrust' (Pro 16:3) or 'trust'; *cf.* Psa 22:8." (Kidner)

b. **And He shall bring it to pass:** The one who has this delighted focus upon God will see Him **bring** these promises **to pass**. Fame and fortune are not promised, but the true and deep desires of the heart find their fulfillment.

i. "The more we fret in this case, the worse for us. Our strength is to sit still. The Lord will clear the slandered. If we look to his honour, he will see to ours." (Spurgeon)

c. **He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light:** As God fulfills these desires of heart, the **righteousness** of the man or woman of God is revealed, shining forth in **light** like the **noonday** sun.

i. **He shall bring forth your righteousness:** "To the view of the world; from which it hath hitherto seemed to be hid or eclipsed by reproaches, and by grievous calamities." (Poole)

ii. **As the light:** "It shall be as visible to men as the light of the sun, and that at noon-day." (Poole)

iii. "As God said in the beginning, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' so he shall say, Let thy innocence appear, and it will appear as suddenly and as evident as the *light* was at the beginning." (Clarke)

4. (7-8) *Find rest in the God who deals with the wicked.*

**Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.**

**Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;
Do not fret—it only causes harm.**

a. **Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him:** Because God has promised to faithfully take care of those who put their trust in Him, we can **rest in the LORD**. We can **wait patiently for Him** instead of fretting and fearing that God has forgotten us or intends evil for us.

i. **Rest in the LORD** speaks of a particular kind of **rest** – the rest of *silence*, ceasing from words of self-defense. The idea is that we will not speak to vindicate ourselves; we will trust in God to protect us.

ii. "Do not murmur or repine at his dealings, but silently and quietly submit to his will, and adore his

judgments, and, as follows, *wait* for his help.” (Poole)

iii. “If the spotless Lamb of God was silent, before those who were divesting him of his honours, and robbing him of his life, ‘silent’ resignation cannot but become one who suffers for his sins.” (Horne)

b. **Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret – it only causes harm:** David wisely advised the man or woman of God to give up **anger, wrath**, and worry (**fret**). They accomplish nothing except **harm**. They are the opposite of delighting oneself in the LORD and patiently waiting upon Him.

i. **Cease from anger:** “Especially anger against the arrangements of Providence, and jealousies of the temporary pleasures of those who are so soon to be banished from all comfort. Anger anywhere is madness, here it is aggravated insanity.” (Spurgeon)

5. (9-11) *Trust that God will punish evildoers and reward the meek.*

**For evildoers shall be cut off;
But those who wait on the LORD,
They shall inherit the earth.
For yet a little while and the wicked *shall be no more*;
Indeed, you will look carefully for his place,
But it *shall be no more*.
But the meek shall inherit the earth,
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.**

a. **Those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth:** This is another reason for our delight in and rest upon the LORD. We can trust His promise that He will take care of His own not only in this world, but in the world to come. In contrast, **evildoers shall be cut off**.

i. "I have frequently remarked to you that, although the wolf is very strong and fierce, and the sheep is very weak and timid, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves; and the day will come when the last wolf will be dead, and then the sheep shall cover the plains and feed upon the hills. Weak as the righteous often are, they 'shall inherit the land' when the wicked shall have been cut off from the earth." (Spurgeon)

b. **For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more:** The evildoers have their day of prosperity, but it is short-lived. Soon the wicked who are the famous and praised in this world will be of no notice or standing at all (**you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more**).

i. "The shortness of life makes us see that the glitter of the wicked great [ones] is not true gold." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The whole duration of the world itself is but 'a little while' in the sight of him whose hope is full of immortality." (Horne)

c. **But the meek shall inherit the earth:** For emphasis, David repeated the idea of God's care for and reward to the **meek**. They, not the evildoers of this world, **shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace**.

i. "The 'meek' are they who bear their own adversities, and the prosperity of their enemies, without envy, anger, or complaint." (Horne)

ii. "The context gives the best possible definition of *the meek*: they are those who choose the way of patient faith instead of self-assertion." (Kidner)

iii. **The meek shall inherit the earth:** Jesus quoted this line in the Sermon on the Mount, in the third

beatitude (Mat 5:5). "It is right to say that Psalms 37 is an exposition of the third beatitude, even though it was written a thousand years before Jesus began his public ministry. It unfolds the character of the meek or trusting person in the face of the apparent prosperity of the wicked." (Boice)

B. The triumph of the godly and the passing of the wicked.

1. (12-15) With a laugh, God defeats the wicked.

**The wicked plots against the just,
And gnashes at him with his teeth.
The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees that his day is coming.
The wicked have drawn the sword
And have bent their bow,
To cast down the poor and needy,
To slay those who are of upright conduct.
Their sword shall enter their own heart,
And their bows shall be broken.**

a. **The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth:** Earlier in this psalm, David contrasted the fate of the righteous with the fate of the wicked. Now he considered the inevitable conflict between the righteous and the **wicked** – how, without reason, **the wicked plots against the just**. Their gnashing of teeth shows the depth of their anger and hatred.

i. "The wicked show by their gestures what they would do if they could; if they cannot gnaw they will gnash: if they may not bite they will at least bark."
(Spurgeon)

b. **The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming:** For all the plotting and gnashing of teeth of

the wicked, they accomplish nothing against the Lord and His people. God simply **laughs** at them, knowing their end.

i. "If God can laugh at the wicked, shouldn't we be able at least to refrain from being agitated by them?" (Boice)

ii. **For He sees that his day is coming:** "The evil man does not see how close his destruction is upon his heels; he boasts of crushing others when the foot of justice is already uplifted to trample him as the mire of the streets." (Spurgeon)

c. **The wicked have drawn the sword and have bent their bow:** The wicked plot and gnash their teeth, but they do not stop there. They work to carry out their plots and their fierce anger against God's people. Even so, God shall protect His own and **their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.**

i. "Like Haman they shall be hanged upon the gallows built by themselves for Mordecai. Hundreds of times has this been the case. Saul, who sought to slay David, fell on his own sword." (Spurgeon)

2. (16-17) *God's blessing upon the humble righteous.*

**A little that a righteous man has
Is better than the riches of many wicked.
For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
But the LORD upholds the righteous.**

a. **A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked:** Since whatever the wicked has cannot last, the little that the **righteous man has is better** than all that the wicked possess. A God-trusting, righteous life is the best long-term investment strategy.

i. "His blessing can multiply a mite into a talent, but his curse will shrink a talent to a mite." (Horne)

ii. "A little blest is better than a great deal curst; a little blest is better than a world enjoyed; a pound blest is better than a thousand curst; a black crust blest is better than a feast curst; the gleanings blest are better than the whole harvest curst; a drop of mercy blest is better than a sea of mercy curst." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous:** The reward of the wicked is to have their own arms **broken**. The reward of the righteous is to be upheld by God's own arms.

3. (18-20) *The lasting good of the upright.*

**The LORD knows the days of the upright,
And their inheritance shall be forever.
They shall not be ashamed in the evil time,
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
But the wicked shall perish;
And the enemies of the LORD,
Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish.
Into smoke they shall vanish away.**

a. **The LORD knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever:** The apparent reward of the wicked is temporary and fleeting. The **inheritance** of the upright is eternal. All this is more reason to avoid worry or envy of the wicked in their seeming (yet temporary) prosperity.

i. **For the LORD knows the days of the upright:** "He is acquainted with all his *circumstances*, *severings*, and *ability* to bear them; and he will either *shorten his trials* or *increase his power*." (Clarke)

b. **In the days of famine they shall be satisfied:** God can even find a way to provide for His own when others have nothing.

c. **Into smoke they shall vanish away:** The success, fame, and prosperity of the wicked is as temporary as **smoke**. It never has any real substance and soon vanishes completely.

i. **Into smoke they shall vanish away:** Adam Clarke noted that some ancient manuscripts render this line differently. "If we follow the *Hebrew*, it intimates that *they shall consume as the fat of lambs*. That is, as the *fat* is *wholly consumed* in sacrifices by the fire on the altar, so shall they consume away in the fire of God's wrath."

4. (21-22) *Blessing and cursing.*

**The wicked borrows and does not repay,
But the righteous shows mercy and gives.
For *those* blessed by Him shall inherit the earth,
But *those* cursed by Him shall be cut off.**

a. **The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives:** David knew that the difference between the wicked and the righteous was not only found in what they believed and in whom they trusted. The difference was also often seen in their conduct. The **wicked** are takers, borrowing and not repaying. The **righteous** are givers, full of **mercy**.

i. **Does not repay:** "May *refuse* to do it, because he is a *wicked man*; or be *unable* to do it, because he is reduced to *beggary*." (Clarke)

b. **Those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth:** The promise of earth-inheritance is repeated a third time. This is a blessing for the righteous, while the wicked find themselves **cursed by** the LORD and **cut off**.

5. (23-24) *God's guidance and support for the good man.*

**The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.**

**Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;
For the LORD upholds *him with His hand*.**

a. **The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:** The reward for the righteous is not only in the age to come. In the present day, God guides **the steps of a good man**. As he seeks the LORD and delights in Him, he finds his life proves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1-2).

i. **The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:** "There is nothing for *good* in the text. *Geber* is the original word, and it properly signifies *a strong man, a conqueror or hero*; and it appears to be used here to show, that even the *most powerful* must be supported by the Lord, otherwise their strength and courage will be of little avail." (Clarke)

ii. "This was emphatically true of the man Christ, whose steps Jehovah established, and in whose way he delighted." (Horne)

b. **And He delights in his way:** Another great and present benefit for the righteous man or woman is the knowledge that God **delights** in him. This is especially clear for the believer under the New Covenant who knows and experiences a standing in grace, having been justified by faith (Rom 5:1-2).

c. **Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand:** David described a third great benefit for the righteous man or woman who trusts in the LORD. Though he may at times **fall** (in the sense of stumbling), he will not fall *away* – that is, **shall not be utterly cast down**. This is not

because of his own internal strength or goodness, but because **the LORD upholds him**.

C. Wisdom from a man after God's heart.

1. (25-26) A testimony of God's blessing and care for the righteous.

**I have been young, and *now* am old;
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his descendants begging bread.
He is ever merciful, and lends;
And his descendants *are* blessed.**

a. **I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread:** David gave a testimony from his own experience. He noted that God cared for those who trusted in Him and walked in His righteousness. They were not **forsaken** and their **descendants** were also blessed.

i. This was David's testimony after many years (**I have been young, and now am old**). Seeing God's faithfulness to His people, David wanted a younger generation to also trust in Him, learning from his wisdom.

ii. David knew that among his ancestors were some who left Israel, fearful in a time of famine (Ruth 1). When they returned after several disastrous years in Moab, they found the people of Bethlehem had been provided for. God knew how to take care of those who trusted in Him in times of famine, and has done so since then.

iii. One way that God provides for the **righteous** and their **descendants** is through the ethic of hard work that belongs to the redeemed, who know that all things should be done heartily, as unto the LORD – including working for a living.

b. I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread: This statement is troublesome to some, because they have seen or experienced instances where godly men or women – or their offspring – have been in famine, extreme poverty, or reduced to begging.

i. We first note that this psalm is a wisdom psalm, very much like Proverbs. In the Bible's wisdom literature, *general principles* are often presented in the absolute when they are intended to be understood as general or even overwhelming principles – understanding that there can be exceptions.

ii. We also note that David simply wrote of *his* experience. He did not write that this was an absolute principle, but his own observation.

iii. Some, like Adam Clarke, had the same experience and observation: "I believe this to be literally true in all cases. I am now grey-headed myself; I have travelled in different countries, and have had many opportunities of seeing and conversing with religious people in all situations in life; and I have not, to my knowledge, seen one instance to the contrary. I have seen no *righteous man forsaken*, nor any *children of the righteous begging their bread*. God puts this honour upon all that fear him; and thus careful is he of *them*, and of their *posterity*."

iv. Others, like Charles Spurgeon, did not have the same experience and observation: "It is not my observation just as it stands, for I have relieved the children of undoubtedly good men, who have appealed to me as common [beggars]. But this does not cast a doubt upon the observation of David."

v. "And it has been my unhappy lot, within these very walls, to have to minister relief to the unworthy and reprobate sons of Christian ministers, about whose piety I could entertain no doubt, and some of whom, are now in heaven. These good men's children have walked contrary to God, so God has walked contrary to them. I have often hoped that the poverty I saw might be the means of bringing them to seek the God of their fathers!" (Spurgeon)

vi. "With the more complex civilization in the midst of which we live, perhaps sometimes the righteous have been driven to beg, but even now such cases are surely rare, and after some varied experience I would want to subject him who begs to somewhat severe cross-examination before accepting his testimony against the psalmist." (Morgan)

c. **He is ever merciful, and lends:** In times of scarcity, the righteous one not only receives God's provision, but with a generous and **merciful** heart he **lends** to others in need.

i. "How stingy, covetous professors can hope for salvation is a marvel to those who read such verses as this in the Bible." (Spurgeon)

2. (27-29) *The promised reward for obedience.*

**Depart from evil, and do good;
And dwell forevermore.
For the LORD loves justice,
And does not forsake His saints;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.
The righteous shall inherit the land,
And dwell in it forever.**

a. **Depart from evil, and do good:** The righteous man or woman trusts in God, but also receives and values moral instruction. God's care for him does not make him careless, but careful in pleasing Him.

i. This line also speaks to the righteous man or woman in the heat of difficulty. "A conflict with evil too often tempts one to fight the enemy with his own weapons." (Kidner)

ii. "Having therefore these glorious promises and privileges, let no man do any evil or unjust thing to enrich or secure himself, nor abstain from pious and charitable actions for fear of undoing himself by them." (Poole)

b. **For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints:** Since God loves justice, so should His people. He is faithful to them and does not **forsake** them, **but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.**

i. **The descendants of the wicked shall be cut off:** "The children who follow the wicked steps of wicked parents shall, like their parents, be cut off. God's *judgments descend to posterity*, as well as his *mercies*." (Clarke)

c. **The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever:** Once again in this psalm, David described the blessing appointed to the righteous in the coming age. They would find a secure place and inheritance in the world to come.

i. The saints shall one day have power over all things; and meanwhile they are sure of a sufficiency, if not a superfluity." (Trapp)

3. (30-31) *The character of God's righteous one.*

**The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom,
And his tongue talks of justice.
The law of his God *is* in his heart;
None of his steps shall slide.**

a. **The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom:** David again turns to the conduct of God's righteous man or woman, noted for their wise and just words.

b. **The law of his God is in his heart:** The righteous man (or woman) is also noted by his possession of and love for the word of God. In a way that would be truly fulfilled by the New Covenant, he has the word of God in his heart (Jer 31:33). Because of this knowledge of and reliance upon God's word, **none of his steps shall slide.**

i. "He hath a Bible in his head and another in his heart." (Trapp)

4. (32-33) *The character and the response of the wicked.*

**The wicked watches the righteous,
And seeks to slay him.
The LORD will not leave him in his hand,
Nor condemn him when he is judged.**

a. **The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him:** In considering the remarkable blessings God has appointed to the righteous, David did not think it meant life would be easy. One danger continually faced was from the wicked who hated the righteous without cause.

i. "There want not those still that carry about Cain's bloody club, hating to the death that goodness in another that they neglect in themselves." (Trapp)

b. **The LORD will not leave him in his hand:** Thankfully, the righteous man or woman is not at the mercy of the wicked. God will protect him, particularly in

the ultimate judgment (**nor condemn him when he is judged**).

i. "And the day is coming, when he who hath stood tamely at the bar of men, and hath suffered for truth and righteousness, shall be advanced to a throne among the saints and martyrs, to assist at the trial of his once-insulting judges." (Horne)

5. (34-36) *An exhortation to trust, based on testimony.*

**Wait on the LORD,
And keep His way,
And He shall exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it.
I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a native green tree.
Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more;
Indeed I sought him, but he could not be found.**

a. **Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land:** For the *fifth time* in this psalm, David promised the people of God that they would **inherit the land**. As king of Israel, David had a concern for their territory, but he could also extend that thought to the age to come. God's people have their place, even a **land** of some sort in the coming age.

I, **Wait on the LORD:** "Wait in obedience as a servant, in hope as an heir, in expectation as a believer." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Wait on the LORD, and keep His way:** "While we are waiting let us take heed of wavering." (Watson, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it:** For the *fifth time* in this psalm, David promised that the wicked would be **cut off** or cut down in some sense.

Their coming doom was just as certain as the coming blessing and security of the righteous.

i. David used a **green tree** as a picture of the wicked in their prosperity. Psalms 1 uses a flourishing tree as a picture of the righteous. "Here it is used in reverse, the wicked being compared to a green tree which flourishes for a time but soon passes away and is seen no more." (Boice)

c. **I have seen the wicked in great power:** David once again relied on his personal experience and testimony. He had seen wicked people rise to great security and success, only to have **passed away** and to have become **no more**.

i. **Behold, he was no more:** "What clean sweeps death makes! To the surprise of all men the great man was gone, his estates sold, his business bankrupt, his house alienated, his name forgotten, and all in a few months!" (Spurgeon)

6. (37-38) *An invitation to gain the same testimony.*

**Mark the blameless *man*, and observe the upright;
For the future of *that man is* peace.
But the transgressors shall be destroyed together;
The future of the wicked shall be cut off.**

a. **Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright:** The righteous men and women of this world get little attention. The culture is more interested in the godless and the wicked. Yet David counseled us to notice the **blameless** and the **upright** of this world, because **the future of that man is peace**.

b. **The future of the wicked shall be cut off:** For the sixth and final time in this psalm, David reminds us that the future of the wicked is no future to be desired.

- i. "There is nothing unworthy in solemn thankfulness when God's judgments break the teeth of some devouring lion." (Maclaren)

7. (39-40) *The reliable help and deliverance of the LORD.*

**But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
He is their strength in the time of trouble.
And the LORD shall help them and deliver them;
He shall deliver them from the wicked,
And save them,
Because they trust in Him.**

a. **The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD:**
This is a helpful thought at the end of this psalm. In David's praise and encouragement of righteous men or women, it is possible that one might think those ones are saved by their own righteousness. David reminds us that their salvation **is from the LORD**, and that **He is their strength in the time of trouble**.

- i. **He is their strength in the time of trouble:**
"While trouble overthrows the wicked, it only drives the righteous to their strong Helper, who rejoices to uphold them." (Spurgeon)

b. **He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him:** David brings the thought back to the fundamental **trust** that the righteous have in God. Their place in Him is secured in their trusting love of the LORD.

Do Not Forsake Me, O Lord

Psa 38:1 O LORD, don't punish me in your anger!

Psa 38:2 You have wounded me with your arrows; you have struck me down.

Psa 38:3 Because of your anger, I am in great pain; my whole body is diseased because of my sins.

Psa 38:4 I am drowning in the flood of my sins; they are a burden too heavy to bear.

Psa 38:5 Because I have been foolish, my sores stink and rot.

Psa 38:6 I am bent over, I am crushed; I mourn all day long.

Psa 38:7 I am burning with fever and I am near death.

Psa 38:8 I am worn out and utterly crushed; my heart is troubled, and I groan with pain.

Psa 38:9 O Lord, you know what I long for; you hear all my groans.

Psa 38:10 My heart is pounding, my strength is gone, and my eyes have lost their brightness.

Psa 38:11 My friends and neighbors will not come near me, because of my sores; even my family keeps away from me.

Psa 38:12 Those who want to kill me lay traps for me, and those who want to hurt me threaten to ruin me; they never stop plotting against me.

Psa 38:13 I am like the deaf and cannot hear, like the dumb and cannot speak.

Psa 38:14 I am like those who do not answer, because they cannot hear.

Psa 38:15 But I trust in you, O LORD; and you, O Lord my God, will answer me.

Psa 38:16 Don't let my enemies gloat over my distress; don't let them boast about my downfall!

Psa 38:17 I am about to fall and am in constant pain.

Psa 38:18 I confess my sins; they fill me with anxiety.

Psa 38:19 My enemies are healthy and strong; there are many who hate me for no reason.

Psa 38:20 Those who pay back evil for good are against me because I try to do right.

Psa 38:21 Do not abandon me, O LORD; do not stay away, my God!

Psa 38:22 Help me now, O Lord my savior!

Psalms 38:1-22

Psalms 38 – The Sick Sinner’s Only Hope

*This psalm is titled **A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.** "Since with God to remember is to act, this word speaks of laying before Him a situation that cries out for His help." (Derek Kidner)*

It is a song full of pain and dark with guilt, as David felt the sore effects (seemingly both physical and spiritual) of his sin. Commentators guess at the occasion of this in David’s life, but there is no certain link to a specific time or event.

"The same title is given to Psalms 70, where in like manner the Psalmist pours out his complaint before the Lord." (Charles Spurgeon)

This is one of those noted as the penitential psalms, along with Psalms 6, 32, 51, 102, 130, , 143.

A. The depth of David’s trouble.

1. (1-2) Pierced by God’s displeasure.

**O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath,
Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!
For Your arrows pierce me deeply,
And Your hand presses me down.**

a. **Do not rebuke me in Your wrath:** Under a sense of God’s deep displeasure, David cried out to God. He followed a wise path, drawing near to the LORD though he sensed both God’s **wrath** and **displeasure**.

i. "The anger of others I can bear, but not thine. As thy love is most sweet to my heart, so thy displeasure is most cutting to my conscience." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The petition here preferred, as in the sixth Psalm, is, that Jehovah would not condemn as a judge, but chasten as a father, for the amendment and preservation of the offender." (Horne)

b. **Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down:** David used poetic pictures to describe how deeply he sensed the displeasure of God.

i. **Your arrows pierce me:** "This no doubt, refers to the *acute pains* which he endured; each appearing to his feeling as if an arrow were shot into his body." (Clarke)

c. **Your hand presses me down:** We read of the deep distress and agony of David in the psalm and recognize that it was because of his own sin (as will be described). We then understand that on the cross Jesus was made the target of the same agony, but *for our sins, not for His own*. This **hand** pressed **down** upon Jesus, and in a greater way than David ever knew.

i. "The holy Jesus, at the time of his passion, received these arrows, and sustained this weight, for the sins of the whole world." (Horne)

ii. Understanding the agony helps us to understand something of the greatness of the love that sent Him to the cross – *for us*.

2. (3-5) *Overwhelmed by iniquity.*

**There is no soundness in my flesh
Because of Your anger,
Nor *any* health in my bones
Because of my sin.
For my iniquities have gone over my head;
Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
My wounds are foul *and* festering
Because of my foolishness.**

a. **There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger:** David not only sensed God's displeasure spiritually, but also physically. This may have been because the chastening hand of God was evident in some kind of illness or injury, or it may have been because of the physical toll of stress in a season of deep spiritual depression.

i. "That David describes a *natural disease* here cannot reasonably be doubted; but what that disease was, who shall attempt to say? However, this is evident, that whatever it was, he most deeply deplored the cause of it; and as he worthily lamented it, so he found mercy at the hand of God." (Clarke)

b. **Nor any health in my bones because of my sin:** David recognized the hand of God in his misery, but he did not think it was without cause. He knew that it was **because of his sin, his iniquities, and his foolishness.** David was miserable, but not a victim in the commonly understood sense – because his sins were the cause of the crisis.

i. "'*Thine anger...my sin.*' I, alas! am as an anvil under two hammers; one of thine anger, another of my sin; both of them beating incessantly upon me." (Baker, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **Because of my sin:** "For although David confesses that he is being judged for his sin – God has made this clear to him – he is nevertheless glorifying God in the way he deals with it. Primarily, he is not faulting God." (Boice)

c. **Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me:** David felt oppressed under the weight of his sins. He hoped that an honest and heartfelt telling of his misery would move God's compassion.

i. **My wounds are foul and festering:** "Sin is the wound of the soul, which must be washed with the tears of repentance, cleansed by the blood of Christ, and healed by the Spirit of the Holy One." (Horne)

ii. "Am I addressing any, who think they are not saved because they have not known such terrors as some others have experienced? Let me remind you, dear friends, that there are many of the true children of God who have never known these horrors.... *These horrors and terrors are not essential to salvation, or else they would have been commanded.*" (Spurgeon)

3. (6-8) David's trouble and turmoil.

**I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
For my loins are full of inflammation,
And *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
I am feeble and severely broken;
I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.**

a. **I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly:** The pain of David's sin affected him in almost every way. He described a severe depression and melancholy as well as specific bodily afflictions (**full of inflammation...no soundness in my fles**). He was weak and **severely broken**.

i. "No fastidiousness keeps the psalmist from describing offensive details." (Maclaren)

ii. **Loins are full of inflammation:** Barnes suggested that this might refer to a problem with the kidneys, such as painful kidney stones. "The word here used, according to Gesenius, properly denotes the internal muscles of the loins near the kidneys." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **Bowed down greatly:** "As the body by pain, so the soul by guilt, is 'distorted' from its original uprightness; it is 'bowed down' to the earth, through shame and fear." (Horne)

b. **I groan because of the turmoil of my heart:** David was known as the sweet psalmist of Israel (2Sa 23:1). Yet with great honesty, he could also **groan** before God and man, composing a bitter psalm describing his misery in the strongest of terms.

i. **I groan:** The King James Version may follow the Hebrew more accurately by translating, *I have roared*. "When our prayers appear to be rather animal than spiritual, they are none the less prevalent with the...Father of mercy." (Spurgeon)

5. (9-10) *Hiding nothing in his misery.*

**Lord, all my desire is before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.
My heart pants, my strength fails me;
As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me.**

a. **Lord, all my desire is before You:** Speaking to God as his master (**Lord, Adonai**), David appealed to God with complete transparency. His misery was not **hidden from** God or from any who would hear this psalm.

i. Our instinct is to follow the pattern of Adam and Eve and hide our sin and hide from God. David here is an example of the kind of unconcealed communication that is important for the one who truly desires God.

ii. **All my desire:** "Intense groaning desires towards God are in themselves works of grace." (Spurgeon)

b. **As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me:** David felt so low that life and **light** were leaving him.

i. **My heart pants:** "The heart's action is described by a rare word, which in its root means to go round and round, and is here in an intensive form expressive of violent motion." (Maclaren)

6. (11-14) *Forsaken by friends, hunted by enemies.*

My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague,

And my relatives stand afar off.

Those also who seek my life lay snares *for me*;

Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction,

And plan deception all the day long.

But I, like a deaf *man*, do not hear;

And *I am* like a mute *who* does not open his mouth.

Thus I am like a man who does not hear,

And in whose mouth *is* no response.

a. **My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague:** David's misery was unrelieved by either **friends** or **relatives**. His **loved ones** either did not care or could not help David.

i. "Relief may come in the form of the little pleasures of life and in the moments of shared experiences with friends, but the psalmist had none of these." (VanGemeren)

ii. "The word *plague* is perhaps chosen for its associations with leprosy (e.g., four times in Lev 13:3, Hebrew), for this is how his friends were treating David." (Kidner)

b. **Those also who seek my life lay snares for me:** David endured worse than the lack of support from friends and relatives. He also faced determined enemies who constantly plotted his **destruction**.

c. **I am like a man who does not hear:** David was so depressed and afflicted that he felt powerless to respond

to these attacks. His inability to defend himself meant that he needed God more than ever.

i. **In whose mouth is no response:** "Like David, when he let Shimei shriek his curses at him from the hillside and answered not, the psalmist is deaf and silent to malicious tongues. He will speak to God, but to man he is silent, in utter submission of will." (Maclaren)

ii. "David was bravely silent, and herein was eminently typical of our Lord Jesus, whose marvellous silence before Pilate was far more eloquent than words." (Spurgeon)

B. The glimmer of hope in the LORD.

1. (15-16) *Hope in the God who will hear.*

For in You, O LORD, I hope;

You will hear, O Lord my God.

For I said, "*Hear me*, lest they rejoice over me,

Lest, when my foot slips, they exalt *themselves* against me."

a. **For in You, O LORD, I hope:** Despite his spiritual depression, David clung to **hope** in the LORD. Though he did not feel it, in faith he said, **You will hear**. David chose to allow his affliction to press him toward God instead of away from the God who was his only hope.

b. **LORD...Lord...God:** Psa 38:15 is an example of the use of the three Hebrew words most commonly used to refer to God in one verse.

- **LORD**, translated *Yahweh*, referring to the covenant God of Israel.

- **Lord**, translated *Adonai*, referring to God as Master or person of respect.

- **God**, translated *Elohim*, the plural of the word for God in the generic sense.

c. **Hear me, lest they rejoice over me:** David appealed to God not only because he was miserable, but also because he did not want his adversaries to rejoice over him.

2. (17-20) *Ready to fall before strong enemies.*

**For I *am* ready to fall,
And my sorrow *is* continually before me.
For I will declare my iniquity;
I will be in anguish over my sin.
But my enemies *are* vigorous, *and* they are strong;
And those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied.
Those also who render evil for good,
They are my adversaries, because I follow *what is*
good.**

a. **For I will declare my iniquity:** David again thought about his own sin that was the cause of his misery. In many other psalms David declared his innocence, especially in comparison to his enemies – but not in this psalm. This psalm came out of David's **anguish over his sin**.

i. "To be sorry for sin is no atonement for it, but it is the right spirit in which to [turn] to Jesus, who is the reconciliation and the Saviour." (Spurgeon)

b. **My enemies are vigorous, and they are strong:** David appealed to God for help in light of the energy and strength of his enemies, and because they were against him for no good reason (**I follow what is good**).

i. **They are my adversaries:** The Hebrew word translated **adversaries** is the root for the title *Satan*. "They Satanically hate me, as if they were transformed into so many breathing devils." (Trapp)

3. (21-22) The urgent plea unto God.

**Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, be not far from me!
Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!**

a. **Do not forsake me, O LORD:** The psalm closes without eloquence, only with a heartfelt cry. More than anything, David wanted the sense of God's presence (**be not far from me**). It is likely that the absence of that sense was David's greatest trial in this dark season.

i. "Whoever carefully reads over this psalm will see what a grievous and bitter thing it is to sin against the Lord, and especially to sin after having known his mercy, and after having escaped from the corruption that is in the world. Reader, be on thy guard; a life of righteousness may be lost by giving way to a moment's temptation, and a fair character sullied for ever!" (Clarke)

b. **Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation:** David pressed his need before God with urgency and looked to the LORD as his only **salvation**. The psalm ends without a change in circumstances but with continued faith in God.

i. In these last two verses, David again used the three most common Hebrew references to Deity. "The God he knew by name (Yahweh, 21a) and by covenant (*my God*), and as Master and Saviour (22b)." (Kidner)

What Is the Measure of My Days?

Psa 39:1 I said, "I will be careful about what I do and will not let my tongue make me sin; I will not say anything while evil people are near."

Psa 39:2 I kept quiet, not saying a word, not even about anything good! But my suffering only grew worse,

Psa 39:3 and I was overcome with anxiety. The more I thought, the more troubled I became; I could not keep from asking:

Psa 39:4 " LORD, how long will I live? When will I die? Tell me how soon my life will end."

Psa 39:5 How short you have made my life! In your sight my lifetime seems nothing. Indeed every living being is no more than a puff of wind,

Psa 39:6 no more than a shadow. All we do is for nothing; we gather wealth, but don't know who will get it.

Psa 39:7 What, then, can I hope for, Lord? I put my hope in you.

Psa 39:8 Save me from all my sins, and don't let fools make fun of me.

Psa 39:9 I will keep quiet, I will not say a word, for you are the one who made me suffer like this.

Psa 39:10 Don't punish me any more! I am about to die from your blows.

Psa 39:11 You punish our sins by your rebukes, and like a moth you destroy what we love. Indeed we are no more than a puff of wind!

Psa 39:12 Hear my prayer, LORD, and listen to my cry; come to my aid when I weep. Like all my ancestors I am only your guest for a little while.

Psa 39:13 Leave me alone so that I may have some happiness before I go away and am no more.

Psalms 39:1-13

Psalms 39 – Wisdom to Speak Under God's Correction

This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.**

The Chief Musician *is thought by some to be the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6).*

Jeduthun *(mentioned also in the titles of Psalms 62, 77) was one of the musicians appointed by David to lead Israel's public worship (1Ch 16:41; 1Ch 25:1-3).*

*This is a **Psalm of David**, though it cannot be connected to any specific point in his life. It is possible that it was from his last few years of life.*

A. David finds the words to pray a prayer of wisdom.

1. (1-3) David's silent agony.

**I said, "I will guard my ways,
Lest I sin with my tongue;
I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle,
While the wicked are before me."
I was mute with silence,
I held my peace even from good;
And my sorrow was stirred up.
My heart was hot within me;
While I was musing, the fire burned.
Then I spoke with my tongue:**

a. I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue:
David began this psalm by recounting his prayer – asking God's help in not speaking foolishly or sinfully when **the wicked are before me.**

i. "David's feelings were running high enough to be taken for disloyalty if he had vented them in the wrong company." (Kidner)

ii. "He knew how his words would be misunderstood and misused by such persons. To them his words would seem to be a criticism of God and his ways." (Boice)

iii. "The firmest believers are exercised with unbelief, and it would be doing the devil's work with a vengeance if they were to publish abroad all their questionings and suspicions." (Spurgeon)

b. **I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good:** David found it easier to speak *nothing* than to speak *wisely*. He soon felt the pressure that one feels when intense feelings are kept silent.

i. In the previous psalm David showed his godliness by his silence before his accusers (*I am like a mute who does not open his mouth*, Psa 38:13). In Psalms 38 the idea was that David did well to not defend himself. Here he did well to not speak his doubts and fears **while the wicked are before me**.

ii. "Perhaps he feared that if he began to talk at all, he would be sure to speak amiss, and, therefore, he totally abstained. It was an easy, safe, and effectual way of avoiding sin, if it did not involve a neglect of the duty which he owed to God to speak well of his name." (Spurgeon)

c. **My heart was hot within me:** In this instance silence was not golden for David. It brought him sorrow and inner turmoil (**the fire burned**).

i. "The metaphors 'my heart grew hot' and 'the fire burned' express anger (cf. Deu 19:6; Jer 51:39; Eze 36:5). The more he reflected on his situation, the more he became exasperated." (VanGemeren)

2. (4-6) *David's wise words.*

**"LORD, make me to know my end,
And what *is* the measure of my days,
That I may know how frail I *am*.
Indeed, You have made my days *as* handbreadths,
And my age *is* as nothing before You;**

Certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor.”
Selah

**"Surely every man walks about like a shadow;
Surely they busy themselves in vain;
He heaps up *riches*,
And does not know who will gather them."**

a. **LORD, make me to know my end:** David's silence was broken in the best way – by humble prayer to God. He would not speak his fears and doubts before the wicked, but he would pour them out before His God. Here David asked God for wisdom – specifically, the wisdom to know the shortness and the frailty of his life (**that I may know how frail I am**).

i. We might have expected David to break his silence by telling off his enemies or by defending his own righteousness. He did neither; he sought God for wisdom. "It is well that the vent of his soul was Godward and not towards man. Oh! if my swelling heart must speak, Lord let it speak with thee." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Make me to know my end:** "This was not a prayer inspired by a desire to know when life would end; it was not a request to be told the date of death. It was a prayer for an accurate apprehension of the fact that life quantitatively – that is, as to the number of its days – is as nothing." (Morgan)

iii. **You have made my days as handbreadths:** "He compares it to a 'handbreadth,' one of the smallest units of measurement in ancient Israel. It is equivalent to 'a couple of inches.'" (VanGemeren)

iv. "Life is very short, but *a great deal may be done*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in three years, saved the world. Some of his followers in three years have been the means of saving many and many a soul." (Spurgeon)

b. **Certainly every man at his best state is but a vapor:** David was a champion, an accomplished Special Forces warrior, a leader, a celebrity, a skilled poet, a musical genius, a survivor, and a king. If anyone might have thought more highly of himself, David had the right to. Yet he understood that he, like **every man** is – **at his best state** – merely **a vapor**, a puff of steam or smoke.

i. “He learns that, since life is short, the only real meaning of a man or woman’s existence must be in his relationship to God, for God is eternal.” (Boice)

c. **Selah:** The idea in the Hebrew for this word (occurring 74 times in the Old Testament) is for a *pause*. Most people think it speaks of a reflective pause, a pause to meditate on the words just spoken. It may also be a musical instruction, for a musical interlude of some kind.

i. This **Selah** is an appropriate call for each one to *pause* and think of the shortness and frailty of his life. It should drive us to great dependence upon God and great earnestness about life and doing good in the short time we do have.

d. **Surely they busy themselves in vain:** Sounding very much like the later Book of Ecclesiastes, David thought about the mass of humanity who lived ignoring the shortness and frailty of life.

- Each of them **walks about**, but like a **shadow**, living a life with no substance.

- They are **busy**, but in **vain**, being blind to eternal things.

- Each of them works hard and **heaps up riches**, yet does not think beyond his own short and frail life.

i. *This* is the land of shadows. Heaven is the land of reality, of true high definition.

ii. "Every man that *exists*, is vanity. All his projects, plans, schemes, etc., soon come to nothing. His body also moulders with the dust, and shortly passes both from the *sight* and *remembrance* of men." (Clarke)

B. The cause revealed, the cure requested.

1. (7-11) *Trusting God in a season of correction for sin.*

"And now, Lord, what do I wait for?

My hope *is* in You.

Deliver me from all my transgressions;

Do not make me the reproach of the foolish.

I was mute, I did not open my mouth,

Because it was You who did *it*.

Remove Your plague from me;

I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.

When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity,

You make his beauty melt away like a moth;

Surely every man *is* vapor." Selah

a. **And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in**

You: Perceiving the shortness and frailty of life made David put his expectation and hope upon God and not upon himself. In right standing and friendship with the Living God, David could understand and prepare for life beyond this life.

i. "Here the psalmist steps off the sand, and puts his foot on the rock. Happy is the man who can say to the Lord, 'My hope is in thee.'" (Spurgeon)

ii. **My hope is in You:** "That is life, in which desire and expectation are centered in God. Such life is of an entirely different quality from that in which desire and expectation are centered in self, in circumstances, or in men." (Morgan)

b. **Deliver me from all my transgressions:** David looked to God and not to himself for deliverance from

sin. He knew – as the Apostle Paul would later declare – that the focus should be on God and not self (Rom 7:24 to Rom 8:4).

i. **Deliver me from all my transgressions:** “That I may not be disappointed of my hopes of enjoying thee and thy favour, which is the only thing that I desire, pardon all my sins, which stand like a thick cloud between thee and me, and fill me with fears about my condition both here and hereafter.” (Poole)

c. **Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand:** We learn that David prayed this prayer from a season of great weakness and the sense that he was under the painful correction of God. He successfully avoided speaking words of self-justification; as he poured out his heart to God, he also prayed for relief from his affliction.

i. “It is bold for a sufferer to say to God, ‘Hold! enough!’ but all depends on the tone in which it is said. It may be presumption, or it may be a child’s free speech, not in the least trenching on a Father’s authority.” (Maclaren)

ii. **Because it was You who did it:** “He does not understand everything; but at least he knows that a personal God, instead of an impersonal force, is in charge over his life.” (VanGemeren)

d. **When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty melt away like a moth:** We learn that David’s great sense of the shortness and frailty of life came under a deep and painful sense of the correction of God. We can suppose that this was one of the reasons God sent His correction to David: to give him the hunger for, the prayer for, and the blessing of this wisdom.

- i. "The metaphor of a moth suggests the brevity of man's life or the destructive power of a moth."
(VanGemeren)

2. (12-13) *A humble prayer for restored favor and regained strength.*

**"Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And give ear to my cry;
Do not be silent at my tears;
For I *am* a stranger with You,
A sojourner, as all my fathers were.
Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain
strength,
Before I go away and am no more."**

a. **Do not be silent at my tears; for I am a stranger with You:** David appealed to Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, asking that He answer with mercy upon him in his sense of separation from God.

- i. **My tears:** "His prayer swells into crying, and that again melts into tears, which go straight to the great Father's heart. Weeping eyes are never turned to heaven in vain; the gates of mercy open wide when the hot drops touch them." (Maclaren)

b. **I am a stranger with You, a sojourner, as all my fathers were:** David was not only a native Israeli, but *the king of Israel*. If anyone had a claim to citizenship it was he; yet he understood that his real home was in heaven and not upon this earth.

- i. Significantly, David did not say that he was a *stranger from God*, but a **stranger with** God. He was a **stranger**, but not alone. They were strangers together in a hostile world. "Here is a man still undergoing trial and acutely conscious of it, but he

has found the secret place of communion and this conditions his attitudes.” (Morgan)

ii. “Abraham first described himself as a stranger and a sojourner.... All his children, those who inherit a like faith, must say the same. Faith cannot find a home on this side of the stars. It has caught a glimpse of the Infinite, and it can never be content with anything else.” (Meyer)

iii. “If an Englishman goes to the Continent, and tries to pass himself off as a German or a Frenchman he is soon detected; and, in a similar fashion, a true Christian reveals the, fact that he is an alien in this world, his ways and manners and customs are not those of the men of the world, who have their portion in this life.” (Spurgeon)

iv. If we are indeed strangers and sojourners, then it follows that:

- It is sure we have a home somewhere.
- It is not surprising that we sometimes long to get home.
- If we are strangers, then we should treat each other well.
- It could be a comfort to the Christian in death.

c. Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength: Knowing that his weakness was due to the heavy hand of God upon him, David humbly asked God to look at him no longer with the eyes of correction. The psalm ends without resolution, but David appeals to and shows trust in the LORD.

i. “Yet for the moment, like Job or Jeremiah, he can see no more than death, and ask no more than respite.... The very presence of such prayers in

Scripture is a witness to His understanding. He knows how men speak when they are desperate." (Kidner)

ii. **Before I go away and am no more:** "Hebrew *before I go*, to wit, unto the grave, as this phrase is used, Gen 15:2; Gen 25:32; or *the way of all the earth*, as the phrase is completed, Jos 23:14; or *whence I shall not return*, as it is Job 10:21." (Poole)

iii. "This Psalm is, with the utmost propriety, appointed by the church to be used at the burial of the dead, as a funeral is indeed the best comment upon it." (Horne)

My Help and My Deliverer

Psa 40:1 I waited patiently for the LORD's help; then he listened to me and heard my cry.

Psa 40:2 He pulled me out of a dangerous pit, out of the deadly quicksand. He set me safely on a rock and made me secure.

Psa 40:3 He taught me to sing a new song, a song of praise to our God. Many who see this will take warning and will put their trust in the LORD.

Psa 40:4 Happy are those who trust the LORD, who do not turn to idols or join those who worship false gods.

Psa 40:5 You have done many things for us, O LORD our God; there is no one like you! You have made many wonderful plans for us. I could never speak of them all—their number is so great!

Psa 40:6 You do not want sacrifices and offerings; you do not ask for animals burned whole on the altar or for sacrifices to take away sins. Instead, you have given me ears to hear you,

Psa 40:7 and so I answered, "Here I am; your instructions for me are in the book of the Law.

Psa 40:8 How I love to do your will, my God! I keep your teaching in my heart."

Psa 40:9 In the assembly of all your people, LORD, I told the good news that you save us. You know that I will never stop telling it.

Psa 40:10 I have not kept the news of salvation to myself; I have always spoken of your faithfulness and help. In the assembly of all your people I have not been silent about your loyalty and constant love.

Psa 40:11 LORD, I know you will never stop being merciful to me. Your love and loyalty will always keep me safe.

Psa 40:12 I am surrounded by many troubles—too many to count! My sins have caught up with me, and I can no longer see; they are more than the hairs of my head, and I have lost my courage.

Psa 40:13 Save me, LORD! Help me now!

Psa 40:14 May those who try to kill me be completely defeated and confused. May those who are happy because of my troubles be turned back and disgraced.

Psa 40:15 May those who make fun of me be dismayed by their defeat.

Psa 40:16 May all who come to you be glad and joyful. May all who are thankful for your salvation always say, "How great is the LORD!"

Psa 40:17 I am weak and poor, O Lord, but you have not forgotten me. You are my savior and my God—hurry to my aid!

Psalms 40:1-17

Psalms 40 ñ The Servant Comes to Do Godís Will

This psalm is simply titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.**

To the Chief Musician: *Well might so exceedingly precious a Psalm be specially committed to the most skilled of the sacred musicians.* (Charles Spurgeon)

A Psalm of David: G. Campbell Morgan speculated, *In this case the reason for the song in all probability was that of the deliverance of David from all the long experience of outlawry and suffering; and the fact that he had been brought to his coronation.*

A. Proclaiming a joyful deliverance.

1. (1-3) *The blessed results of patient waiting for the LORD.*

**I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth
Praise to our God;
Many will see *it* and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.**

a. **I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me:** The idea of David waiting on or for the LORD has been common, especially in the last few psalms (Psa 25:5; Psa 25:21; Psa 27:14; Psa 37:7; Psa 37:9). In the previous psalm (39:7) David waited upon the LORD without immediate answer. Here, the answer is stated: **He inclined to me, and heard my cry.**

i. *I waited patiently*, Heb. *in waiting I waited*; which doubling of the word notes that he waited diligently and earnestly, patiently and perseveringly, until God should please to help him. (Poole)

ii. The theme of waiting, expounded in Psalms 37, has had its painful application in Psalms 38, 39, but now its triumphant outcome. (Kidner)

iii. Think ye, brethren, might it not read "I waited impatiently for the Lord," in the case of most of us? (Spurgeon)

b. **He inclined to me, and heard my cry:** The word **inclined** has the sense of God bending down to David in his affliction, removing any perceived distance between the LORD and His servant. When David knew God **heard** his cry, he was confident of a favorable answer.

i. The patient waiting resulted in the singer's feeling that Jehovah was bending over him and listening to his cry. (Morgan)

ii. As when someone's attention is arrested and riveted. (Kidner)

c. **He also brought me up out of a horrible pit...and set my feet upon a rock:** These were further benefits to David as he **waited patiently for the LORD**. God delivered him from his present crisis (which was like **miry clay**), and set him in a much better and more secure place (**established my steps**). David's prayer for deliverance was answered.

d. **He has put a new song in my mouth to praise to our God:** This is another benefit to David in waiting on the Lord. His deliverance brought forth spontaneous praise, a **new song** that came from God Himself.

i. God will inspire songs and words of praise. This almost sounds selfish or self-serving, but when we understand how good and right it is for the creature to praise the Creator, the redeemed to praise the Redeemer, the delivered to praise the Deliverer, then

it makes sense. We are grateful that God gives us the ability to praise Him.

ii. It is possible that this psalm was the **new song** God put into David's mouth. 'The suffering servant of God always becomes the singing one. For as the secret of song is ever that of waiting for God, doing the will of God, in and through suffering, the result is always deliverance, and the issue a song.' (Morgan)

e. **Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD:** This is one more benefit from David's patient waiting for the LORD. The deliverance and the praise that came from it were an effective testimony to others. They were inspired to **fear** the LORD and to **trust** in Him.

i. **Trust in the LORD:** 'Trusting in the Lord is the evidence nay the essence of salvation. He who is a true believer is evidently redeemed from the dominion of sin and Satan.' (Spurgeon)

2. (4-5) *Trusting the God who thinks about His people.*

**Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust,
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn
aside to lies.**

**Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works
Which You have done;**

And Your thoughts toward us

Cannot be recounted to You in order;

If I would declare and speak of them,

They are more than can be numbered.

a. **Blessed is that man who makes the LORD his trust:** This is a natural and appropriate thought flowing from what David had just experienced. He knew by experience that **trust** – as shown by waiting patiently for the LORD – is **blessed**.

i. "A man may be as poor as Lazarus, as hated as Mordecai, as sick as Hezekiah, as lonely as Elijah, but while his hand of faith can keep its hold on God, none of his outward afflictions can prevent his being numbered among the blessed, but the wealthiest and most prosperous man who has no faith is accursed, be he who he may." (Spurgeon)

b. **And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies:** David connected trusting God with moral conduct – in this case, the ability to discern and judge the character of others and act appropriately toward them. Perhaps David's crisis came from refusing to **respect the proud** or those who **turn aside to lies**.

i. **Does not respect the proud:** "For the *proud* he uses the term that became the nickname for Egypt, the empty blusterer, Isa 30:7." (Kidner)

c. **Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works...and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted:** David praised God as the worker of many wonderful works *and* for His **thoughts** toward His people. David knew that God thought about him (and His people), and thought about them favorably – otherwise there would be no blessing in those thoughts.

i. "Creation, providence, and redemption, teem with wonders as the sea with life." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The past is full of His miracles (*wondrous deeds*), the future full of his plans – this is the force of the word *thoughts*." (Kidner)

iii. In Psa 8:4 David wondered, *What is man that You are mindful of him?* He considered the greatness of the universe and was amazed that God would think about man at all. Here he took that idea much further and is amazed at *how much* God thinks about His

people. By implication he is also amazed that God thinks such loving, gracious thoughts toward His people, and so many that **they are more than can be numbered.**

iv. God's **thoughts toward us** are wonderful because they are *God's* thoughts. 'When *I* think, it is a poor, little, weak, empty head that is thinking; but when God thinks, the gigantic mind which framed the universe is thinking upon me.' (Spurgeon)

v. God's **thoughts toward us** are wonderful because they are *so many*; they **cannot be recounted.** 'You cannot count God's thoughts of you'. One gracious thought is followed by another, swiftly as the beams of light flash from the sun, so that it is impossible for us to number them.' (Spurgeon)

B. The willing servant proclaims God's praise.

'Here we enter upon one of the most wonderful passages in the whole of the Old Testament, a passage in which the incarnate Son of God is seen not through a glass darkly, but as it were face to face.' (Spurgeon)

1. (6-8) *The coming of the Bond Servant.*

Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;

My ears You have opened.

Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.

Then I said, 'Behold, I come;

In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.

I delight to do Your will, O my God,

And Your law *is* within my heart.'

a. **Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened:** David understood that in a relative sense, God didn't want animal sacrifices. God wanted surrendered, willing servants.

i. In Psa 40:6 four kinds of offering are mentioned:

- **Sacrifice** (offerings made with blood).
- **Offering** (offerings made without blood).
- **Burnt offering** (offerings of total consecration).
- **Sin offering** (offerings to atone for sin).

ii. What did God **desire** instead of sacrifice? *Obedience*. This was true for David's predecessor Saul. King Saul offered sacrifices just fine; what he didn't do was obey God (1Sa 15:22-23). Ultimately this was fulfilled by the Son of David. Jesus came and was perfectly obedient, and His obedience is credited unto us.

b. **My ears You have opened**: Instead of animal sacrifices, God wants servants who will *listen* to Him and surrender to Him as a willing slave surrenders to his master.

i. David likely referred to the custom of marking a bond-servant according to Exo 21:5-6, where a slave who *wanted* to remain in his master's house and in his master's service would be marked with an **opened** ear ñ that is, *his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever* (Exo 21:6).

ii. It's a remarkable thing to think of this ceremony being carried out in ancient Israel. A servant said, 'I know I have fulfilled my *obligations* to my master, and I have served what I have owed. Yet I love my master and am so grateful for what he has given that I will gladly obligate myself for life, not out of debt or shame or defeat, but out of love.' *This was David's heart toward God*, and this heart and life were greater than any animal sacrifice.

iii. The ceremony in Exo 21:5-6 described only *one* ear being pierced through or opened. The text of Psalms 40 describes *two* † **ears You have opened**.

Some regard this as evidence that the psalmist had something else in mind other than the bond-slave ceremony, such as simply opening the ear to hear and obey. It is better to regard it as David's expression of total surrender ñ beyond what the law itself demanded, as if he said 'Lord, take *both* my **ears!**'

iv. Horne gives an explanation apart from the Exo 21:5-6 ceremony: 'For the expression, 'Mine ears hast thou opened,' seems equivalent to, 'Thou hast made me obedient.' Thus, Isa 50:5, 'The Lord God hath opened mine ears, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.' (Horne)

c. **Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened:** David's surrender to God was wonderful and an impressive example. Yet he only foreshadowed the ultimate submission to God carried out by the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Heb 10:5-10 quotes the Septuagint (ancient Greek) translation of Psa 40:6-8. This is a wonderful and remarkable prophecy of the work of Jesus.

- It shows God's ultimate dissatisfaction in animal sacrifices, looking forward to a Perfect Sacrifice (**Sacrifice and offering You did not desire**).
- It shows that God the Son came in a prepared body (the Septuagint reads, *But a body You have prepared for Me*, Heb 10:5).
- It shows the public, open coming of the Messiah. It was as if Jesus said, 'Behold, here I am ñ I am the One.' (**Behold, I come**).
- It shows the Messiah as the great theme of the Hebrew Scriptures (**In the scroll of the book it is written of Me**).

- It shows the dedication of the Messiah to the will of God (**I delight to do Your will**).

- It shows the Messiah's love for and obedience to the word of God (**Your law is within My heart**).

i. **Sacrifice and offering You did not desire:** It is remarkable, that all the offerings and sacrifices which were considered to be of an atoning or cleansing nature, offered under the law, are here enumerated by the psalmist and the apostle, to show that *none* of them, nor *all* of them, could take away sin; and that the grand sacrifice of Christ was that alone which could do it. (Clarke)

ii. The Septuagint, from which Paul quoted, has translated this passage, "A body hast thou prepared me:" how this reading arose it is not easy to imagine, but since apostolical authority has sanctioned the variation, we accept it as no mistake, but as an instance of various readings equally inspired. (Spurgeon)

d. **In the scroll of the book it is written of me:** In a far lesser sense David could say this of himself, because his ascension to the throne of Israel was prophesied long before it took place. Yet any fulfillment of this in David is a pale shadow to its amazing and perfect fulfillment in David's greater Son, Jesus the Messiah.

e. **I delight to do Your will, O my God:** Again, in a far lesser sense this was true of David, the man after God's heart. Yet any fulfillment of this in David is a pale shadow of its amazing and perfect fulfillment in David's greater Son, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus said that doing God's will was to Him as necessary and delightful as food (Joh 4:34).

i. **I delight to do Your will:** ìJesus not only did the Fatherís will, but found a delight therein; from old eternity he had desired the work set before him; in his human life he was straitened till he reached the baptism of agony in which he magnified the law, and even in Gethsemane itself he chose the Fatherís will, and set aside his own.î (Spurgeon)

ii. **To do:** ìIt was Jesus who was the doer of the work. The Father willed it; but he did not do it. It was Jesus who did it, who wrought it out; who brought it in; who carried it within the veil, and laid it as an acceptable and meritorious offering at the feet of his well-pleased Father. The work then is done; it is finished. We need not attempt to do it. We cannot do it. We cannot do that which is already done; and we could not do it, though it were yet undone.î (Frame, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **Your law is within my heart:** Open ìup most menís hearts, and there you shall find written, The god of this present world. But Godís law is in good menís hearts, to live and die with it.î (Trapp)

2. (9-12) Public proclamation of the good news and Godís praise.

I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness

In the great assembly;

Indeed, I do not restrain my lips,

O LORD, You Yourself know.

I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;

I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation;

I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth

From the great assembly.

Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O

LORD;

Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me.

For innumerable evils have surrounded me;

My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up;

They are more than the hairs of my head;

Therefore my heart fails me.

a. **I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly:** David said this to assure God (and himself) that he had glorified God among His people. This was part of the new song and praise that came from his deliverance. David would **not restrain** his **lips** in offering this praise.

i. Yet, as in the previous verses, this has a far greater and perfect fulfillment in Jesus, the Son of David. It was true of Jesus in His earthly ministry. *“This is what Jesus can say. He was the Prince of open-air preachers, the Great Itinerant, the President of the College of all preachers of the gospel.”* (Spurgeon)

ii. It is also true of Jesus in eternity come. Of Jesus it is true, *in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You* (Heb 2:12 as a fulfillment of Psa 22:22). It is a remarkable thing to think of Jesus leading the assembly of God's people in praise to God the Father!

b. **I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart:** The righteousness of God was evident in both David's words and actions. It wasn't set in a secret place that had no connection with how he actually lived his life.

i. **I have not hidden:** *“This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ would be in great temptation to hide it, and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition.”* (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me:**

Though David praised God for past and present deliverance, he would not presume upon the future. He kept himself in humble prayer before God, asking for a constant supply of His **tender mercies**.

i. It is not difficult to see this as a prayer of Jesus, the Son of David. As He lived upon this earth, He did so as a man in constant reliance upon His fellowship and perfect communion with God the Father. We see this as a prayer of Jesus, perhaps especially in His sufferings on the cross: **Do not withhold Your tender mercies from Me, O LORD; let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve Me.**

ii. Truly it was on the cross that Jesus could say, **innumerable evils have surrounded Me.**

d. **My iniquities have overtaken me:** David needed this constant supply of the mercy, lovingkindness, and truth of God because he knew his own sins. He asked God to not leave him to his many sins (**more than the hairs of my head**), but to deliver him in mercy.

i. There is a sense in which Jesus could never say, **My iniquities have overtaken Me.** He was and is the spotless Lamb of God, without any sin or defect. Yet in another sense those words are perfect in their description of Jesus, because in His life and especially His sufferings He consciously and perfectly identified with His people, taking on their sins as His own. For Jesus, they were **My iniquities** ñ but not because he committed the sins, but because out of love He chose to bear them and all the wrath they deserved.

ii. ìIf this be taken of Christ, he is Maximus peccatorum, the greatest of sinners by imputation, 2Co 5:21.î (Trapp)

C. Proclaiming a heartfelt plea for help.

1. (13-15) The plea for deliverance.

Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;

O LORD, make haste to help me!

Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion

Who seek to destroy my life;

Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor

Who wish me evil.

Let them be confounded because of their shame,

Who say to me, 'Aha, aha!'

a. **Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me:** Despite his many iniquities, David could and did rely upon the LORD for deliverance. He skillfully phrased the request, not only asking God to deliver him, but asking God to take pleasure in his deliverance. He could ask boldly because he believed it to be consistent with God's pleasure.

i. We might take this principle and apply it to many of our requests.

- *Be pleased, O LORD, to forgive me.*
- *Be pleased, O LORD, to correct me.*
- *Be pleased, O LORD, to provide for me.*
- *Be pleased, O LORD, to heal me.*
- *Be pleased, O LORD, to guide me.*
- *Be pleased, O LORD, to bless me.*

ii. It should not surprise us that the psalm begins with triumphant praise and then desperately asks for help. 'Are there any deliverances in this perilous and incomplete life so entire and permanent that they leave no room for future perils? Must not provision of

coming dangers accompany thankfulness for past escapes? (Maclaren)

b. **O LORD, make haste to help me:** Though David made his request with skill, it was also made with urgency. David understood that help too long delayed was the same as help denied.

c. **Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who seek to destroy my life:** This was the help that David sought. God had graciously delivered him (Psa 40:1-3), but the threat remained. David prayed that God would **dishonor** his enemies and cause them to be **confounded**.

i. As in many of his psalms, David is in trouble. Yet one would not know this from the first part of the psalm. Yes, David needed God's protection and help and would ask for it ñ but he could not forget or neglect the wonderful deliverance God had given up to that point, and make an appropriately surrendered response.

ii. 'The psalmist prays for his enemies' fall and shame in accordance with the principles of justice and with the promise of God to curse those who cursed his own.' (VanGemeren)

iii. **Who say to me, 'Aha! Aha!':** 'O ungodly reader, if such a person glance over this page, beware of persecuting Christ and his people, for God will surely avenge his own elect. Your 'ahas' will cost you dear. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.' (Clarke)

2. (16-17) *Praise with another plea.*

**Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
Let such as love Your salvation say continually,
'The LORD be magnified!'
But I *am* poor and needy;**

**Yet the LORD thinks upon me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
Do not delay, O my God.**

a. **Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You:** David called the people of God ñ at least those who **seek** Him ñ to be happy in Him, and to **say continually, ìThe LORD be magnified!î**

i. David thought praising God was to

magnify Him ñ that is, to make Him larger in one's perception. Magnification does not actually make an object bigger, and we can't make God bigger. But to magnify something or someone is to *perceive* it as bigger, and we must do that regarding the LORD God.

ii. **Let such as love Your salvation say continually:** ìOne would think that self-love alone should make us love salvation. Ay, but they love it because it is his, òthat love *thy* salvation.í It is the character of a holy saint to love salvation itself; not as his own only, but as God's, as God's that saves him.î (Goodwin, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **But I am poor and needy; yet the LORD thinks upon me:** David could combine his sense of great joy in God with a realistic appraisal of his present need. Secure in the truth that God cared for and thought about him, David again appealed to God to be his **help** and **deliverer**, and he needed God to do this without **delay**.

i. ìHe cries, òI am poor and needy.í His joy is found in Another. He looks away from self, to the consolations which the eternal purpose has prepared for him.î (Spurgeon)

ii. **Poor and needy:** ìWith such a Father and such a Friend, poverty becometh rich, and weakness itself is strong.î (Horne)

iii. **Yet the LORD thinks upon me:** He thought upon thee, and he thinks upon thee still. When the Father thinks of his children, he thinks of thee. When the great Judge of all thinks of the justified ones, he thinks of thee. O Christian, can you grasp the thought? The Eternal Father thinks of *you!* (Spurgeon)

O Lord, Be Gracious to Me

Psa 41:1 Happy are those who are concerned for the poor; the LORD will help them when they are in trouble.

Psa 41:2 The LORD will protect them and preserve their lives; he will make them happy in the land; he will not abandon them to the power of their enemies.

Psa 41:3 The LORD will help them when they are sick and will restore them to health.

Psa 41:4 I said, "I have sinned against you, LORD; be merciful to me and heal me."

Psa 41:5 My enemies say cruel things about me. They want me to die and be forgotten.

Psa 41:6 Those who come to see me are not sincere; they gather bad news about me and then go out and tell it everywhere.

Psa 41:7 All who hate me whisper to each other about me, they imagine the worst about me.

Psa 41:8 They say, "He is fatally ill; he will never leave his bed again."

Psa 41:9 Even my best friend, the one I trusted most, the one who shared my food, has turned against me.

Psa 41:10 Be merciful to me, LORD, and restore my health, and I will pay my enemies back.

Psa 41:11 They will not triumph over me, and I will know that you are pleased with me.

Psa 41:12 You will help me, because I do what is right; you will keep me in your presence forever.

Psa 41:13 Praise the LORD, the God of Israel! Praise him now and forever! Amen! Amen!

Psalms 41:1-13

Psalms 41 – Prayer for Help in Sickness and Against Whispering Traitors

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David**. Alexander Maclaren well described it: "The central mass of this psalm describes the singer as suffering from two evils: sickness and treacherous friends."*

A. The blessed one and the enemy of the blessed one.

1. (1-3) Blessings belonging to the one who considers the poor.

**Blessed is he who considers the poor;
The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.
The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive,
And he will be blessed on the earth;
You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.
The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness;
You will sustain him on his sickbed.**

a. **Blessed is he who considers the poor:** The idea behind the word here translated **poor** may include economic poverty, but it is broader. It has the idea of *weak* or *helpless*. David described the blessings that come to the righteous man or woman, and he summarizes the life of that righteous one by his generosity to **the poor**. David didn't think that this was the only thing that marked the godly, but it was a significant thing.

i. "The poor intended, are such as are poor in substance, weak in bodily strength, despised in

repute, and desponding in spirit. These are mostly avoided and frequently scorned.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “There are plenty around you, who, if not poor in the things of this world, are poor in love and hope and the knowledge of God.” (Meyer)

iii. Upon reflection, **he who considers the poor** – that is, the weak, helpless, and poor – is a broad measure of the righteous man or woman.

- **He who considers the poor** trusts God, willing to give from his own resources.

- **He who considers the poor** is kind to those in need.

- **He who considers the poor** helps those who likely will not help him in return.

- **He who considers the poor** has a generous heart.

- **He who considers the poor** gives for their good, not simply to make himself feel good.

iv. **Considers:** “Implies giving careful thought to this person’s situation, rather than perfunctory help.” (Kidner)

v. Upon reflection, much charity work – by religious, social, and political organizations – fails in this measure: **he who considers the poor**. Money and assistance are given, but in a way that contributes to chronic dependence and deeply ingrained social problems.

b. **The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble:** This begins a list of several blessings that come to the generous person. This was especially true under the Old Covenant (sometimes also called the Mosaic Covenant). An essential aspect of that covenant was blessings for

obedience and curses for disobedience (as in Deuteronomy 28).

i. "Probably, therefore, the general promises of Psa 41:1-3 are silently applied by the psalmist to himself; and he is comforting his own sorrow with the assurance.... He has been merciful, and believes, though things look dark, that he will obtain mercy." (Maclaren)

c. **He will be blessed on the earth:** This is another indication that this promise of blessing for obedience was connected to the Old Covenant, which dealt much more with earthly and physical blessings than with eternal and spiritual matters.

d. **You will sustain him on his sickbed:** Most commentators believe that David's misery and low state in this psalm were due to sickness (Psa 41:8). Perhaps he was in danger of death (Psa 41:5). David trusted that God would bless him for his prior goodness to the weak and needy.

2. (4-6) *A sinner's plea for mercy against evil-speaking enemies.*

**I said, "LORD, be merciful to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."
My enemies speak evil of me:
"When will he die, and his name perish?"
And if he comes to see *me*, he speaks lies;
His heart gathers iniquity to itself;
When he goes out, he tells *it* .**

a. **LORD, be merciful to me:** Without saying it directly, David seemed to appeal to God on the basis of his own good works, especially consideration of the poor (Psa 41:1). In light of his relative righteousness, and

according to the terms of the Old Covenant, David could and did ask God for mercy and blessing.

i. "No appeal is made to justice; the petitioner but hints at the promised reward, but goes straightforward to lay his plea at the feet of mercy." (Spurgeon)

ii. "It is a plea for mercy in view of the merciless treatment the psalmist has been receiving from his foes and friends alike." (Boice)

b. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You:

David knew that he had done much good, but that did not erase his sins. He understood that his sins were directed **against** God and that they made him like a sick or injured person who needed healing in his **soul**. His body was sick, but more important was his soul-sickness.

i. We can identify at least three ways that David say he needed healing for his soul.

- Heal my soul from its great distress.
- Heal my soul of the effect of sin.
- Heal my soul of my tendency to sin.

ii. David made a plain and honest confession of his sins when he said, **I have sinned against You**.

- A confession without excuse.
- A confession without qualification.
- A confession without superficiality.

iii. "Saul and Judas each said, 'I have sinned;' but David says, 'I have sinned *against thee*.'" (Plainer, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "Applying the petition to David and other sinful believers, how strangely evangelical is the argument: heal me, not for I am innocent, but '*I have sinned*.'

How contrary is this to all self-righteous pleading!" (Spurgeon)

v. "There is no note of despair in his prayer. The psalmist is not depressed by the weight of his sin; it is likely that he makes a general confession of unwitting sins that he may have committed." (VanGemeren)

c. **My enemies speak evil of me:** David knew the hurt and difficulty of **evil** and lies spread about him. Like believers of all ages, David had to endure sometimes-outrageous slander and defamation of character.

i. Don't forget that David was a *good king*. "Why should David have had so many enemies if he was actually a good king and a moral person? The reason is jealousy as well as a desire for power in those who were jealous." (Boice)

ii. "It is often a good man's lot to be evil spoken of; to have his *motives*, and even his most *benevolent acts*, misconstrued." (Clarke)

iii. The early history of Christianity tells us the reasons why Christians were persecuted, or at least why people in the Roman Empire thought Christians were worthy of persecution.

- They accused Christians of hostility to the emperors and conspiracy against the state.
- They accused Christians of incest.
- They accused Christians of cannibalism.
- They accused Christians of being atheists.
- They accused Christians of being "haters of humanity."
- They accused Christians of being the reason why problems plagued the empire.

iv. The **enemies** of early Christianity spoke **evil** of the followers of Jesus, *and they spoke lies*.

- Christians were good citizens and prayed for the emperor.
- Christians lived pure moral lives.
- Christians never practiced anything like cannibalism.
- Christians were certainly not atheists.
- Christians loved others, and showed it all the time.
- Christians made the empire better, not worse.

v. Still, these lies were commonly believed and Christians were persecuted because of them. The apologists of the early church did what they could to tell the truth, but it was a losing public relations battle. These lies were popularly believed.

d. **When will he die, and his name perish?** This is what the evil-speaking enemies of David said among themselves. They couldn't wait for David to die, and they did whatever they could to bring his death to pass.

i. **If he comes to see me: See** "is used for visiting the sick in 2 Kings 8:29, and speaks lying condolence, while he greedily collects encouraging symptoms that the disease is hopeless." (Maclaren)

ii. "When they visited the king his courtiers said the right things: 'We were so sorry to hear that you are sick.... We have been praying for you and will continue to pray.... We hope you are going to be better really soon.... Everything is being taken care of.... Is there anything we can do?' These words were sheer hypocrisy. These people were not hoping that David would get well at all. After they left him they said things like, 'Didn't he look awful?... I don't think he's going to make it, do you?'" (Boice)

e. **His heart gathers iniquity to itself:** David thought of the evil heart like a magnet, constantly drawing additional sin and iniquity unto itself.

3. (7-9) *Whispers and betrayal.*

**All who hate me whisper together against me;
Against me they devise my hurt.
“An evil disease,” they say, “clings to him.
And now that he lies down, he will rise up no more.”
Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up *his* heel against me.**

a. **All who hate me whisper together against me:** David knew of – or at least could sense – the whispered conspiracies set in motion against him, meant to **devise** his **hurt**.

i. **All who hate me whisper together:** “The spy meets his comrades in conclave and sets them all a-whispering. Why could they not speak out? Were they afraid of the sick warrior? Or were their designs so treacherous that they must needs be hatched in secrecy?” (Spurgeon)

ii. “The same weapons are frequently employed against the servants of Christ; but let them not be, on that account, discouraged from following their Master.” (Horne)

b. **An evil disease...clings to him:** This may have been true. David described such a time of illness in Psa 38:3; Psa 38:6-8. David’s enemies were happy at the thought that he might die and **rise up no more**.

i. We can imagine how his enemies – probably pretended friends – said this of David as he suffered on his sickbed.

ii. What they said was strong and condemning toward David. "The word 'vile' [**evil**] is a translation of 'Belial' and could also be rendered as 'a sickness from the devil' or 'an accursed disease.'" (VanGemeren)

c. **Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me:** David's woe was made more bitter because among his enemies were those who had once been a

familiar friend to him. He knew what it was like when **trusted** friends – those he had close relationship with (**who ate my bread**) – betrayed him.

i. David was betrayed by his own son Absalom (2 Samuel 15) and by a trusted adviser named Ahithophel (2Sa 15:12; 2Sa 15:31). "What greater wound can there be than a treacherous friend?" (Trapp)

ii. In the ultimate and most sinister sense, this was fulfilled when Judas betrayed Jesus. Jesus specifically applied these words to Judas and his treachery. In Joh 13:18 Jesus quoted this phrase, but only the words *He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me*. Some think Jesus deliberately left off the words **in whom I trusted** because He *didn't* trust Judas. However, Jesus did make him the treasurer among the disciples (Joh 12:6; Joh 13:29).

iii. "The kiss of the traitor wounded our Lord's heart as much as the nail wounded his hand." (Spurgeon)

iv. "So these words were literally fulfilled in David, and yet the Holy Ghost, which dictated them, looked further in them, even to Christ and Judas, in whom they received a further and fuller accomplishment." (Poole)

v. "The idiom 'has lifted up his heel against me' signifies a treacherous act (cf. Gen 3:15; Psa 55:12-14).\" (VanGemeren)

vi. "Not merely turned his back on me, but left me with a heavy kick such as a vicious horse might give.\" (Spurgeon)

B. A plea and praise.

1. (10-12) David prays for mercy from God and triumph over his enemies.

**But You, O LORD, be merciful to me, and raise me up,
That I may repay them.**

**By this I know that You are well pleased with me,
Because my enemy does not triumph over me.**

**As for me, You uphold me in my integrity,
And set me before Your face forever.**

a. **O LORD, be merciful to me and raise me up, that I may repay them:** David prayed not only for forgiveness and deliverance, but also for triumph over his enemies. As the LORD's anointed, he felt justified in this, and looked for God's deliverance as evidence that God was **well pleased** with him.

i. "The plea *that I may repay them* is unusual, in that the psalms mostly pray that God Himself will do this.\" (Kidner)

b. **You uphold me in my integrity:** David felt that in contrast to his enemies, he was a man of **integrity**. Still, he needed God to **uphold** him in his integrity – recognizing that it was God's work in him.

c. **And set me before Your face forever:** This was the most important thing to David, more important than triumph over his enemies. To be **set...before** the **face** of God meant to enjoy His favor and fellowship.

i. "To stand before an earthly monarch is considered to be a singular honour, but what must it be to be a perpetual courtier in the palace of the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible?" (Spurgeon)

ii. We notice that all the benefits of 11-12 are in the present tense. David did not believe that God *would* bring them to him; he believed that *he had them* already.

2. (13) *Ending with praise.*

**Blessed be the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting!
Amen and Amen.**

a. **Blessed be the LORD God of Israel:** Many commentators believe that this is an end not only to this psalm, but to first book of Psalms. Here Yahweh is honored as the covenant God of Israel. It was fitting for David to end the song with his eyes on the LORD, not upon himself or his enemies.

i. The five books of the Psalms are as follows:

- Book One – Psalms 1-41 (41 psalms).
- Book Two – Psalms 42-72 (31 psalms).
- Book Three – Psalms 73-89 (17 psalms).
- Book Four – Psalms 90-105 (16 psalms).
- Book Five – Psalms 106-150 (45 psalms).

ii. "Each of the five books ends with an outburst of praise, clinched by a double Amen (here and at 72:19; 89:52), an Amen and Hallelujah [Praise the Lord, NKJV] (106:48) or, finally, what is virtually a double Hallelujah (150:6), indeed a whole psalm of doxology." (Kidner)

iii. Morgan thought that the emphasis on **the LORD God of Israel** in this doxology was fitting for the first book of Psalms. "The prevailing name of God found in this collection is Jehovah. The songs have set forth in varied ways all that this name meant to the men of faith. Thus the Doxology utters the praise of Jehovah, Who is the God of Israel." (Morgan)

b. **From everlasting to everlasting:** The LORD is to be praised as the eternal God, stretching from eternity past to eternity future.

i. "The word *everlasting* in Hebrew means the vanishing point. The idea is that the God of Israel is Jehovah from the past which is beyond human knowledge, to the future which is equally so.... To us the great truth is made more clear in the words of Jesus: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega.'" (Morgan)

Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul?

Psa 42:1 As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God.

Psa 42:2 I thirst for you, the living God. When can I go and worship in your presence?

Psa 42:3 Day and night I cry, and tears are my only food; all the time my enemies ask me, "Where is your God?"

Psa 42:4 My heart breaks when I remember the past, when I went with the crowds to the house of God and led them as they walked along, a happy crowd, singing and shouting praise to God.

Psa 42:5 Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled? I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him, my savior and my God.

Psa 42:6 (6-7) Here in exile my heart is breaking, and so I turn my thoughts to him. He has sent waves of sorrow over my soul; chaos roars at me like a flood, like waterfalls

thundering down to the Jordan from Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar.

Psa 42:8 May the LORD show his constant love during the day, so that I may have a song at night, a prayer to the God of my life.

Psa 42:9 To God, my defender, I say, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go on suffering from the cruelty of my enemies?"

Psa 42:10 I am crushed by their insults, as they keep on asking me, "Where is your God?"

Psa 42:11 Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled? I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him, my savior and my God.

Psalms 42:1-11

Psalms 42 – Honest Prayer from a Discouraged Saint

This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the sons of Korah.**

We don't know when the psalms were gathered into five books, but the separation dates back to before our oldest manuscripts, compiled in the Masoretic Text. This is the first psalm of Book Two; the psalms of Book Two share some general differences with the psalms of the Book One.

The Hebrew word in reference to God is emphasized differently in the first two books of Psalms. "According to Franz Delitsch, in book one the name Jehovah occurs 272 times and Elohim only 15. But in book two, Elohim occurs 164 times and Jehovah only 30 times." (James Montgomery Boice)

In Book One of Psalms , 37 of the 41 are specifically attributed to David, and the four remaining are unattributed. David is the only known psalmist in Book One.

In Book Two of Psalms, David authored 18 of the 31, more than half. But now, other psalmists appear: Asaph and Solomon have one each, seven (perhaps eight) psalms belong to the sons of Korah, and three have no author listed.

The sons of Korah were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).

Korah led a rebellion of 250 community leaders against Moses during the wilderness days of the Exodus (Numbers 16). God judged Korah and his leaders and they all died, but the sons of Korah remained (Num 26:9-11). Perhaps they were so grateful for this mercy that they became notable in Israel for praising God.

A. The deep need of the psalmist.

1. (1-3) A sense of great need, distance from God's house, and discouraging words bring a deep sense of despair.

**As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say to me,
"Where *is* your God?"**

a. **As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God:** The sons of Korah began this psalm with a powerful image – a **deer** aching with thirst. Perhaps the thirst came from drought or from heated pursuit; either way, the deer *longed for* and *needed* water. In the same way, the psalmist's **soul** *longed for* and *needed* God.

i. "Ease he did not seek, honour he did not covet, but the enjoyment of communion with God was an urgent

need of his soul; he viewed it not merely as the sweetest of all luxuries, but as an absolute necessity, like water to a stag." (Spurgeon)

b. **My soul thirsts for God, for the living God:** The psalmist wasn't thirsty for water, but for God. Drinking and thirst are common pictures of man's spiritual need and God's supply. Here, the emphasis is on the *desperation* of the need.

i. One may go many days without food, but **thirsts** shows an even more urgent need. "Which is more than hungering; hunger you can palliate, but thirst is awful, insatiable, clamorous, deadly." (Spurgeon)

ii. **For God:** "Not merely for the temple and the ordinances, but for fellowship with God himself. None but spiritual men can sympathise with this thirst." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Sorrow is always a sense of lack. The sorrow of bereavement is the sense of the loss of a loved one. The sorrow of sickness is the lack of health. The ultimate sorrow is the sense of the lack of God. This was the supreme sorrow of the singer." (Morgan)

iv. He is the **living God** in at least three senses:

- He alone has life in Himself and of Himself.
- He alone gives life.
- He is distinct from the dead, imagined gods of the heathen.

c. **When shall I come and appear before God:** For the sons of Korah – connected to the tabernacle and the temple and their rituals – there was an appointed place to **appear before God**. This was a longing to connect again with God and His people at the tabernacle or temple.

i. **Appear before God:** "In the place of his special presence and public worship. See Exo 23:15; Exo 25:30. What is called before the Lord, 1 Chronicles 13:10, is before or with the ark, 2 Samuel 6:7." (Poole)

ii. "It is not that he does not believe that God is everywhere, or that God is not with him. He is praying to God in the psalms, after all. But his being away from home has gotten him down, and his depressed state has caused him to feel that God is absent." (Boice)

iii. "A wicked man can never say in good earnest, '*When shall I come and appear before God ?*' because he shall do so too soon, and before he would, as the devils that said Christ came 'to torment them before their time.' Ask a thief and a malefactor whether he would willingly appear before the judge." (Horton, cited in Spurgeon)

d. **My tears have been my food day and night:** These tears can perhaps be understood in at least two ways. First, they demonstrated the grief that made the psalmist long for relief in God. Second, they showed the psalmist's grief over the perceived distance from God. Either or both of these could be the case; yet the need was plainly deep and great.

i. "The next best thing to living in the light of the Lord's love is to be unhappy till we have it, and to pant hourly after it." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Possibly his tears and grief took away his appetite, and so were to him instead of food." (Poole)

e. **While they continually say to me, "Where is your God":** Making the problem worse was being in the company of those who wanted to discourage the

psalmist. They wanted to make him feel that at his moment of need, God was nowhere to be found.

i. "The first real atheism came with Greek philosophy. So the taunt did not mean that God did not exist, but that God had abandoned the psalmist." (Boice)

ii. "Other of God's suffering saints have met with the like measure. At Orleans, in France, as the bloody Papists murdered the Protestants, they cried out, Where is now your God? What is become of all your prayers and psalms now? Let your God that you called upon save you now if he can." (Trapp)

iii. **Where is your God:** "David might rather have said to them, Where are your eyes? where is your sight? for God is not only in heaven, but in me." (Sibbes, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (4) Painful memories bring further discouragement.

**When I remember these things,
I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go with the multitude;
I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.**

a. **I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God:** The remembering of happier times made the psalmist sadder. He thought of the times of joyful worship at the **house of God** and felt so distant from those better days.

i. **Pour out my soul:** "My soul is dissolved, becomes weak as water, when I reflect on what I have had, and on what I have lost." (Clarke)

ii. **I pour out my soul within me:** "In me, i.e. within my own breast, between God and my own

soul; not openly, lest mine enemies should turn it into a matter of rejoicing and insulting over me.” (Poole)

b. **With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast:** He especially remembered the high times of the holidays that marked the Jewish calendar. He thought of the **multitude** and excitement (**voice of joy and praise**) that marked the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

3. (5) *Wise speaking to his own soul.*

Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance.

a. **Why are you cast down, O my soul:** The psalmist paused from the painful memory to challenge his own soul. He did not surrender to his feelings of spiritual depression and discouragement. Instead, he *challenged* them and brought them before God. He said to those **cast down** and **disquieted** feelings, “**Hope in God**. He will come through again, because He has before.”

i. This is a long way from the surrender that often traps the discouraged or spiritually depressed person. He didn’t say, “My soul is cast down and that’s how it is. There is nothing I can do about it.” The challenge made to his own soul – demanding that it explain a *reason* why it should be so cast down – is a wonderful example. There were some valid reasons for discouragement; there were many more reasons for hope.

ii. It also wasn’t as if he had not already given many reasons for his discouragement. Many things bothered him.

- Distance from home and the house of God (42:2, 42:6).
- Taunting unbelievers (42:3, 42:10).
- Memories of better days (42:4).
- The present absence of past spiritual thrills (42:4).
- Overwhelming trials of life (42:7).
- God's seemingly slow response (42:9).

Still, it was as if the psalmist said, "Those are not good enough reasons to be **cast down** when I think of the greatness of God and the **help** of His favor and presence."

iii. "The result is not deadening his sense of sorrow but rather setting it in right relationship to God." (Morgan)

iv. "You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: 'Why art thou cast down – what business have you to be disquieted?'" (Lloyd-Jones, cited in Boice)

v. "David chideth David out of the dumps." (Trapp)

b. **Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him:** In his discouragement, the psalmist spoke to himself – perhaps even preached to himself. He didn't feel filled with praise at the moment. Yet he was confident that as he did what he could to direct his **hope in God**, that praise would come forth. "I don't feel like praising Him now, but He is worthy of my **hope** – and **I shall yet praise Him.**"

i. "Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey towards it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us." (Smiles, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **The help of His countenance:** The psalmist knew to look for help in God's **countenance** – that is, the approving face of God. He found a better place by challenging his sense of gloom and seeking after God's face, **His countenance**.

i. **For the help of His countenance:** "Hebrew, *for the salvations of his face*." (Poole) "Note well that the main hope and chief desire of David rest in the smile of God. His face is what he seeks and hopes to see, and this will recover his low spirits." (Spurgeon)

ii. "When the sun arises, we cannot be without light; when God turns his countenance towards us, we cannot be without 'salvation.'" (Horne)

iii. In seeking **the help of His countenance**, the psalmist understood that the answers were not within himself, but in the living God. He didn't look within; he looked up.

B. Bringing the need to God.

1. (6) *An honest prayer from a distant place.*

**O my God, my soul is cast down within me;
Therefore I will remember You from the land of the
Jordan,
And from the heights of Hermon,
From the Hill Mizar.**

a. **O my God, my soul is cast down within me:** In an almost detached sense, the psalmist reported his **cast down** soul to God. This was wise, because a common tendency in such times is to *stay away* from God or act as if we could *hide* the problem from him. The psalmist did neither.

b. **Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan:** This explains why he was so far from the house of God and could not appear at the tabernacle or

temple. He was far north of Jerusalem, in **the heights of Hermon**.

i. "We know the chief thing that was bothering him. He was far from Jerusalem and its temple worship on Mount Zion, and therefore felt himself to be cut off from God." (Boice)

ii. **The Hill Mizar**: "'Mizar' is probably the name of a hill otherwise unknown, and specifies the singer's locality more minutely, though not helpfully to us." (Maclaren)

2. (7-8) *A prayer from the depths of discouragement.*

**Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.
The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the
daytime,
And in the night His song *shall be* with me—
A prayer to the God of my life.**

a. **Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls**: Perhaps the psalmist saw or thought of a waterfall in this high country. He saw how the water plunged down into a deep pool at the base of the waterfall and thought, "I feel that deeply buried under my misery." It was as if **all Your waves and billows have gone over me** and he was buried under.

i. The psalmist knew, "I'm in deep trouble on the outside and I'm in deep trouble on the inside." These two depths seemed to collide in him, sending him deeper still. It is a powerful and poetic description of despair.

- I hear the constant **noise** of the waterfalls; it never stops.
- I fell from a previous height.

- I plunged down quickly, and was taken down deep.
- I feel buried under all of this.
- I feel like I'm drowning.

ii. Even in this, there are points of light, giving hope.

- I am deep; but You are also – so Your depths call unto me in my depths.
- The waterfalls are Yours; if I am plunged under, then You are with me.
- The waves and billows are Yours; You have measured all this.

iii. "The whole compass of creation affordeth not, perhaps, a more just and striking image of nature and number of those calamities which sin hath brought upon the children of Adam." (Horne)

iv. **Deep calls unto deep:** "One wave of sorrow rolls on me, impelled by another. There is something *dismal* in the sound of the original [Hebrew]." (Clarke)

v. F.B. Meyer thought of this as the depths of God answering to the depths of human need. "Whatever depths there are in God, they appeal to corresponding depths in us. And whatever the depths of our sorrow, desire, or necessity, there are correspondences in God from which full supplies may be obtained." (Meyer)

- "The deep of divine redemption calls to the deep of human need." (Meyer)
- "The deep of Christ's wealth calls to the deep of the saint's poverty." (Meyer)
- "The deep of the Holy Spirit's intercession calls to the deep of the Church's prayer." (Meyer)

b. **The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime:** The covenant name of God – the **LORD**, Yahweh – is somewhat rarely used in Book Two of Psalms. Here it is used with special strength, with great confidence that God will **command His lovingkindness** to be extended to the despairing one.

i. “His expression is remarkable; he does not say simply that the Lord will bestow, but, ‘*command his lovingkindness.*’ As the gift bestowed is grace – free favour to the unworthy; so the manner of bestowing it is sovereign. It is given by decree; it is a royal donative. And if *he* commands the blessing, who shall hinder its reception?” (March, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me:** The psalmist came to a place of greater confidence, secure in God’s goodness to him in the **daytime** or at **night**. In the more frightening **night**, he would have the gracious comfort of **His song** to be **with** him.

d. **A prayer to the God of my life:** This is another statement of confidence. The song from God will be a prayer, but not unto the God of his death, but to the **God of my life**.

3. (9-10) *More honest telling of the psalmist’s discouragement.*

**I will say to God my Rock,
“Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of
the enemy?”
As with a breaking of my bones,
My enemies reproach me,
While they say to me all day long,
“Where *is* your God?”**

a. **I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me"**: There is a pleasant contradiction in this line. The psalmist had the confidence to call God his **Rock** – his place of security, stability, and strength. At the same time he could honestly bring his feelings to God and ask, **"Why have You forgotten me?"**

i. The more experienced saint knows there is no contradiction. It was *because* he regarded God as his **Rock** that he could pour out his soul before Him so honestly.

b. **Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy**: The psalmist senses God sustaining him, but his battle is not over. There is the constant **oppression of the enemy**. The taunt, **"Where is your God?"** continued from them.

4. (11) *A return to a confident challenge of self and focus upon God.*

Why are you cast down, O my soul?

And why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God;

For I shall yet praise Him,

The help of my countenance and my God.

a. **Why are you cast down, O my soul?** As the *oppression of the enemy* continued, so the psalmist would continue to speak to himself and challenge his own sense of discouragement.

i. "It is an important dialogue between the two aspects of the believer, who is at once a man of convictions and a creature of change." (Kidner)

ii. "The higher self repeats its half-rebuke, half-encouragement." (Maclaren)

b. **Hope in God**: The pleasant words of Psa 42:5 are repeated as both important and helpful. The psalmist –

and everyone buried under discouragement – needed to keep **hope in God** and keep confidence that he **shall yet praise Him**.

Send Out Your Light and Your Truth

Psa 43:1 O God, declare me innocent, and defend my cause against the ungodly; deliver me from lying and evil people!

Psa 43:2 You are my protector; why have you abandoned me? Why must I go on suffering from the cruelty of my enemies?

Psa 43:3 Send your light and your truth; may they lead me and bring me back to Zion, your sacred hill, and to your Temple, where you live.

Psa 43:4 Then I will go to your altar, O God; you are the source of my happiness. I will play my harp and sing praise to you, O God, my God.

Psa 43:5 Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled? I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him, my savior and my God.

Psalms 43:1-5

Psalms 43 – From Depression to a Procession of Praise

"This psalm is either a part of the previous one or is closely connected with it." (G. Campbell Morgan) In fact, in a number of ancient Hebrew manuscripts, Psalms 42 and Psalms 43 are joined together as one. They are probably separate psalms, linked by a common problem: spiritual depression.

"We believe the fact is that the style of the poetry was pleasant to the writer, and therefore in after life he wrote this supplemental hymn after the same manner. As an appendix it needed no title." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. The psalmist cries out to God.

1. (1) *God, where are You when the wicked surround me?*

**Vindicate me, O God,
And plead my cause against an ungodly nation;
Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!**

a. **Vindicate me, O God:** The psalmist repeated a familiar theme in psalms – a cry for *vindication*. He felt unjustly accused and took his sense of injustice to the right place – to the throne of God, and he left his vindication up to God.

b. **Deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man:** The psalmist knew the difficulty of dealing with **deceitful** and **unjust** people, because they not only do wrong, but they also know how to cover it up with deceit. In such a tough situation, the psalmist did the right thing – he cried out to God.

i. “*Deceitful and unjust; who covereth his wicked designs with fair and false pretences; which sort of men are hateful to thee, and to all good men.*”
(Poole)

2. (2) *God, why do You seem so distant from me?*

**For You are the God of my strength;
Why do You cast me off?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?**

a. **For You are the God of my strength:** If the psalmist didn't have a relationship with God, he wouldn't have this problem. Yet he did love the Lord, and his trust was in the **strength** of God and not his own strength – so he wondered where God was at his critical moment of need.

b. Why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning:

The repeated asking of *why* is familiar to the tested people of faith. The psalmist wondered why God did not do things according to his thinking, especially when the answer might seem obvious.

3. (3a) *God, I need to be led by Your light and truth.*

Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!

Let them lead me;

a. **Send out Your light and Your truth:** The psalmist knew that *his* light and *his* truth were not enough – he needed the **light** and **truth** of God. It wasn't within him, so if God didn't **send** it, he would not have it.

i. "*Thy light and thy truth, i.e. thy favour, or the light of thy countenance, and the truth of thy promises made to me.*" (Poole)

b. **Let them lead me:** This was a prayer of *submission*. "Lord, I don't want You to send out Your light and truth just so I may *admire* them. I want to submit myself to **Your light** and **Your truth** and have them **lead me**. I need a leader, so **lead me.**"

i. This began the psalmist's *procession of praise*. He began in depression, but he will end up praising God. It all began with the **light** and **truth** of God leading the way.

ii. "We seek not light to sin by, nor truth to be exalted by it, but that they may become our practical guides to the nearest communion with God." (Spurgeon)

B. The psalmist describes his response to God's coming answer.

1. (3b) *When You answer my prayer, I will come to Your house.*

**Let them bring me to Your holy hill
And to Your tabernacle.**

a. **Let them bring me:** The **them** of this statement refers back to the *light* and *truth* of the same verse. The psalmist wanted God's light and truth to lead him to a specific place – to **Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.**

i. Here was the second step in the procession of praise. Led by the light and truth of God, the psalmist came to the **tabernacle**, to the tent of meeting with God. Any place God's people gather together to meet Him can become a **tabernacle.**

b. **Your holy hill to Your tabernacle:** The psalmist wanted to go to the *tent of meeting*. He wanted to because:

- He knew the Lord was there is a special way.
- He knew that God's people were there.
- He knew that it was a place where he could focus on God.

2. (4) *When You answer my prayer, I will praise You.*

**Then I will go to the altar of God,
To God my exceeding joy;
And on the harp I will praise You,
O God, my God.**

a. **I will go to the altar of God:** Full of faith, the psalmist anticipated God's answer to his prayer and declared that he would sacrifice (**go to the altar**) when the answer came. This wouldn't be a sacrifice of atonement for sin, but for gratitude and celebration of fellowship with God.

i. This was the third stop on the *procession of praise*: **the altar.** "The way to God is ever the way of the

altar. The way to the altar is opened by the sending out of light and truth from God.” (Morgan) When we follow the light and truth of the LORD, it will lead us to *His* altar – the cross where Jesus was given as a sacrifice for our sins.

ii. When the writer to the Hebrews stated, *We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat* (Heb 13:10), he likely referred to God’s provision at the cross, the ultimate offering on the ultimate **altar of God**. We can **go to the altar of God** by going in faith to the cross of Jesus and thinking deeply upon His work and victory there.

iii. Under the New Covenant we no longer offer animal sacrifices, but we still bring the sacrifice of praise. Heb 13:15 tells us how: *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name*. Our words and songs of praise become a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

b. **On the harp I will praise You:** The psalmist would not only praise God with animal sacrifice, but also with music and song. He reached his destination on the *procession of praise* – led by the light and truth of the Lord, he came to the house of God, to the **altar of God**, and then it culminated in **praise**.

3. (5) *When You answer my prayer, I will challenge my feelings.*

Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God;
For I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

a. **Why are you cast down, O my soul:** The psalmist had hope of God's redemption, but it had not come yet. In the meantime, he would not surrender to his feelings of depression and discouragement. Instead, he *challenged* those feelings and brought them to God. He said to those **cast down** and **disquieted** feelings, "**Hope in God.** He will faithfully answer again, because He has before."

i. We see that at the end of the psalm, none of the circumstances of the psalmist had changed – only his attitude, and what a difference that made. "Not yet has the answer come. The darkness and the mystery are still about him, but the shining way is seen; and again the soul is forbidden to despair and hope is encouraged in God." (Morgan)

ii. **For I shall yet praise Him:** "The refrain returns to the conflict between faith and doubt, to the contrast between the present and the future, and to the hope that 'I will yet praise him.'" (VanGemeren)

b. **The help of my countenance:** The psalmist knew his **countenance** needed **help** – and God was just the one to bring it. The peace and joy that comes from trusting and praising God will **help** our face.

i. The sense of the Hebrew word is more *salvation* than **help**. One might say that God *saves* the countenance of His people. "The poet can praise God as his 'exceeding joy' and – not merely his *help*, which is too weak a word – his 'salvation.' Outwardly nothing has changed: but he has won through." (Kidner)

ii. "Is there a cure for depression? Yes. But it is not in us. It is in God. The cure is to seek God's face, so ours will not be downcast, which is what the psalmist does." (Boice)

iii. "Faith may have a long struggle with fear, but it will have the last word, and that word will be 'the help of my countenance and my God.'" (Maclaren)

Come to Our Help

Psa 44:1 With our own ears we have heard it, O God—our ancestors have told us about it, about the great things you did in their time, in the days of long ago:

Psa 44:2 how you yourself drove out the heathen and established your people in their land; how you punished the other nations and caused your own to prosper.

Psa 44:3 Your people did not conquer the land with their swords; they did not win it by their own power; it was by your power and your strength, by the assurance of your presence, which showed that you loved them.

Psa 44:4 You are my king and my God; you give victory to your people,

Psa 44:5 and by your power we defeat our enemies.

Psa 44:6 I do not trust in my bow or in my sword to save me;

Psa 44:7 but you have saved us from our enemies and defeated those who hate us.

Psa 44:8 We will always praise you and give thanks to you forever.

Psa 44:9 But now you have rejected us and let us be defeated; you no longer march out with our armies.

Psa 44:10 You made us run from our enemies, and they took for themselves what was ours.

Psa 44:11 You allowed us to be slaughtered like sheep; you scattered us in foreign countries.

Psa 44:12 You sold your own people for a small price as though they had little value.

Psa 44:13 Our neighbors see what you did to us, and they mock us and laugh at us.

Psa 44:14 You have made us a joke among the nations; they shake their heads at us in scorn.

Psa 44:15 I am always in disgrace; I am covered with shame

Psa 44:16 from hearing the sneers and insults of my enemies and those who hate me.

Psa 44:17 All this has happened to us, even though we have not forgotten you or broken the covenant you made with us.

Psa 44:18 We have not been disloyal to you; we have not disobeyed your commands.

Psa 44:19 Yet you left us helpless among wild animals; you abandoned us in deepest darkness.

Psa 44:20 If we had stopped worshiping our God and prayed to a foreign god,

Psa 44:21 you would surely have discovered it, because you know our secret thoughts.

Psa 44:22 But it is on your account that we are being killed all the time, that we are treated like sheep to be slaughtered.

Psa 44:23 Wake up, Lord! Why are you asleep? Rouse yourself ! Don't reject us forever!

Psa 44:24 Why are you hiding from us? Don't forget our suffering and trouble!

Psa 44:25 We fall crushed to the ground; we lie defeated in the dust.

Psa 44:26 Come to our aid! Because of your constant love save us!

Psalms 44:1-26

Psalms 44 – Accounted as Sheep to the Slaughter

*As with Psalms 42, this psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation Of the sons of Korah.** These*

sons of Korah were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).

Psalms 44 speaks of the nation of Israel in a season of great defeat, calling out to God for rescue. Some have thought it to be a psalm of the exile period or even afterwards in the days of the Maccabees. Yet there is reason enough to keep this psalm in the days of Israel's monarchy.

Derek Kidner notes that Thomas Cranmer's Anglican Litany (1544) put together the first and last lines of this psalm "as declaration and petition." In Cranmer's Litany the priest said, O god, we have heard with oure eares, and our fathers have declarid unto us the noble workes that thou dyddest in their dayes, and in the olde tyme. The choir was to respond, O lorde, arise, help us, and delyver us for thy honour. Kidner observed, "It was treating the prayer as a Christian inheritance, not merely an Israelite relic."

A. The great victories of God for Israel, in the past and present.

1. (1-3) God's victory for Israel in the days of Joshua's conquest.

**We have heard with our ears, O God,
Our fathers have told us,
The deeds You did in their days,
In days of old:
You drove out the nations with Your hand,
But them You planted;
You afflicted the peoples, and cast them out.
For they did not gain possession of the land by their
own sword,
Nor did their own arm save them;
But it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of
Your countenance,
Because You favored them.**

a. **Our fathers have told us, the deeds You did in their days:** The psalmist received a special legacy from his **fathers**, from their elder generation. Those **fathers** were careful to tell them what God did in generations past.

i. "They made their mouths as it were books, wherein the noble acts of the Lord might be read to his praise, and to the drawing of their children's hearts unto him." (Trapp)

b. **You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them You planted:** Those of the elder generation told the psalmist of the great work God did when He **drove out** the Canaanites and **planted** Israel in the land promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

c. **They did not gain possession of the land by their own sword...but it was Your right hand:** In reading the story of the conquest in the days of Joshua, there were times when Israel did *nothing* – God alone did the work (Jos 24:12-13). There were other times when Israel had to fight, but their fighting would have accomplished nothing without the **right hand** of God on their behalf.

d. **The light of Your countenance, because You favored them:** This was more important than and prior to having the **right hand** or **arm** of the Lord for them. It was more important to have the face and favor of God for them.

i. We note that these were battles and conquests that happened long before the generation immediately before the time of the psalmist. The **fathers** of Psa 44:1 spoke not only of what they personally had experienced of God, but they also taught what God did many generations before.

ii. "Our equivalent of this memory would be reflections on our spiritual heritage, on events like the Protestant Reformation, the Wesleyan Revivals, or the Great Awakenings." (Boice)

2. (4-8) *Confident prayer for God's victory for Israel in the psalmist's own day.*

**You are my King, O God;
Command victories for Jacob.
Through You we will push down our enemies;
Through Your name we will trample those who rise
up against us.
For I will not trust in my bow,
Nor shall my sword save me.
But You have saved us from our enemies,
And have put to shame those who hated us.
In God we boast all day long,
And praise Your name forever. Selah**

a. **You are my King, O God; command victories for Jacob:** The psalmist received a gift from his **fathers** – telling of God's great work in the past. There was a price for that gift; it made the psalmist dissatisfied with any sense that God wasn't doing the same works in his own day. Therefore he prayed that God **command victories for Jacob** in the present day, as well as in the stories of the past.

b. **Through You we will push down our enemies:** The prayer was prayed with faith. With confidence, the psalmist anticipated the answers to his prayers as if already done.

i. **We will push down our enemies:** "Literally 'We will toss them in the air with our horn;' a metaphor taken from an ox or bull tossing the dogs into the air which attack him." (Clarke)

ii. **Push down...trample:** "The vivid image of Psa 44:5 is taken from the manner of fighting common to wild horned animals, buffaloes and the like, who first prostrate their foe by their fierce charge and then trample him." (Maclaren)

c. **I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me:** Speaking on behalf of Israel, the psalmist assured God that their faith was in God and His power, not in their own strength or skill.

i. "In spiritual, as well as temporal warfare, the appointed means are to be used, but not 'trusted in'; man is to fight, but God giveth the victory; and to him must be ascribed the praise, and the power, and the glory." (Horne)

d. **You have saved us from our enemies:** This implies thanks for past victories. The psalmist didn't speak as if God had done nothing like this before in his own generation.

e. **In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever:** We may suppose that this **praise** was both for what God had done (in the distant and recent past) and in anticipation for what God would do in answer to the present prayer.

i. "At this point we would expect the psalm to be a thanksgiving psalm, a praise psalm, or a psalm of confidence." (Boice) The first word of Psa 44:9 will change the tone completely.

ii. **Selah:** "A pause comes in fitly here, when we are about to descend from the highest to the lowest key. No longer are we to hear Miriam's timbrel, but rather Rachel's weeping." (Spurgeon)

B. Israel's crisis, disappointment, and ultimate trust.

1. (9-16) *Israel's defeat and crisis, and the hand of the Lord in it.*

**But You have cast *us* off and put us to shame,
And You do not go out with our armies.
You make us turn back from the enemy,
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.**

**You have given us up like sheep *intended* for food,
And have scattered us among the nations.**

**You sell Your people for *next to* nothing,
And are not enriched by selling them.**

**You make us a reproach to our neighbors,
A scorn and a derision to those all around us.**

**You make us a byword among the nations,
A shaking of the head among the peoples.**

**My dishonor *is* continually before me,
And the shame of my face has covered me,
Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles,**

Because of the enemy and the avenger.

a. **You have cast us off and put us to shame:** The psalmist now stated his great present need. They felt that God did not fight for Israel and therefore they were without hope in battle. The key to prevailing over their enemies was to first prevail with God.

i. "*Put us to shame*; made us ashamed of our boasting, and trust in thee, which we have oft professed to the face of our enemies." (Poole)

b. **You have given us up like sheep intended for food:** The psalmist understood that for Israel, as a covenant nation, victory or defeat was in the hand of the LORD. Therefore if they were defeated, **scattered**, sold into slavery, made a **reproach** or **derision**, it was

because God's hand was behind it in some way. Notice the repetition of the word **You**.

i. "The distress of God's people deepens with every line of verses 10-12, with rout, spoil, slaughter, scattering and slavery." (Kidner)

ii. **You make us a byword among the nations:** "We are evidently abandoned by thee, and are become so very miserable in consequence, that we are a proverb among the people: 'See the Hebrews! *see their misery and wretchedness! see how low the wrath of God has brought down an offending people!*'" (Clarke)

iii. "The scattering among the nations (Psa 44:11) and the people's clear conscience about idolatry (Psa 44:17 ff.) seem at first sight to indicate post-exilic times for the composition of this psalm; but there were deportations before the exile (*cf.* Amo 1:6; Amo 1:9), and such a psalm as the Davidic Psalms 60 (with strong similarities to the present one) is a reminder that defeat was not unknown in the reigns of loyal kings." (Kidner)

c. **My dishonor is continually before me, and the shame of my face has covered me:** The psalmist was brought low, and not only because of the defeat and disgrace suffered from their enemies. Worse was the sense that it was because God had abandoned Israel, or perhaps was against them.

i. **Reproaches and reviles:** "It seems that from mocking the people of God, the adversaries advanced to reviling God himself, they proceeded from persecution to the sin which is next of kin, namely blasphemy." (Spurgeon)

2. (17-19) *The psalmist protests that Israel had kept faithful to God.*

**All this has come upon us;
But we have not forgotten You,
Nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant.
Our heart has not turned back,
Nor have our steps departed from Your way;
But You have severely broken us in the place of
jackals,
And covered us with the shadow of death.**

a. **All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You:** The psalmist felt duty bound to tell God that despite the feeling they had been forsaken, they had not departed from God. They remembered Him and remained faithful to His **covenant**.

i. The mention of the **covenant** was of special purpose. Under the Old Covenant (sometimes known as the Mosaic or Sinai Covenant) God promised to bless an obedient Israel and curse a disobedient Israel (as in Deuteronomy 28). The psalmist implied that God must now be faithful to His part of the covenant because Israel had been faithful to their part.

ii. "The law of Moses had forewarned that disobedience to the covenant leads to God's displeasure and ultimately to being defeated, despoiled, exiled, and dispersed among the nations (Deu 28:15-68)." (VanGemeren)

b. **Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way:** Without claiming sinless perfection, the psalmist insisted that as a whole, Israel was still committed to God in **heart** and in conduct (**our steps**).

i. We might call this an honest, anti-penitential psalm. Several psalms are deep with a sense of personal sinfulness and contrition. In Psalms 44 we sense the psalmist honestly (and not self-righteously) makes the case that their present distress was *not* due to unaddressed sin or rebellion.

ii. "The arresting fact is, that here is a song revealing an experience of defeat and humiliation, and consequently of suffering, for which no cause is to be found in the conduct of the sufferers." (Morgan)

iii. "The psalm is exploring the baffling fluctuations that have their counterpart in Christian history: periods of blessing and barrenness, advance and retreat, which may correspond to no apparent changes of men's loyalty or methods." (Kidner)

c. But You have severely broken us in the place of jackals, and covered us with the shadow of death:

In firm but polite protest, the psalmist insisted that Israel's faithfulness to God had been answered by disaster sent by God.

i. **Broken us:** "Better to be broken by God than from God. Better to be in the place of dragons [**jackals**] than of deceivers." (Spurgeon)

3. (20-22) Israel's obedience answered with defeat.

**If we had forgotten the name of our God,
Or stretched out our hands to a foreign god,
Would not God search this out?
For He knows the secrets of the heart.
Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

a. **If we had forgotten the name of our God:** The psalmist continued to insist that Israel had remained faithful. They had remembered the Lord and had not

prayed to idols (**stretched out our hands to a foreign god**). If they had, God would know and there was no use in denying it (**He knows the secrets of the heart**).

i. **Stretched out our hands to a foreign god:** "It was customary among the ancients, while praying, to *stretch out their hands* towards the *heavens*, or the *image* they were worshipping, as if they expected to *receive* the favour they were asking." (Clarke)

b. **Would not God search this out:** This means that as far as the psalmist was concerned, in his day there was no Achan moment as in Joshua 7, where calamity came to the people of God because of hidden sin. They had sincerely sought God for just such an understanding.

i. "The words 'would not God have discovered it' mean 'would not God have discovered it *to us*.' That is, 'Wouldn't God have told us what we have done wrong, if we had done wrong?'" (Boice)

c. **Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter:** Despite their claimed faithfulness to God, Israel was afflicted with death and was as helpless before their enemies as **sheep for the slaughter**.

i. "As if we were only meant to be killed, and made on purpose to be victims; as if it were as easy and as innocent a thing to slay us as to slaughter sheep." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The routed fugitives are defenceless and unresisting as sheep, and their fate is to be devoured...the usual butchery of a defeated army." (Maclaren)

iii. **For Your sake** are the important words. It means that they suffered in faithfulness to God, and because of their faithfulness to God. Without developing the

thought, this psalm suggests a revolutionary concept to the Old Testament man or woman of God: suffering may not be a punishment, but a battle scar, "the price of loyalty in a world which is at war with God." (Kidner)

iv. "They suffer for God's sake...In their fidelity to the Lord, they receive greater abuse than if they had conformed to the pagan world." (VanGemeren)

v. The Apostle Paul quoted Psa 44:22 in Rom 8:35-36. The sense is that even in such terrible defeat and disgrace, none of this can separate us from the love of Christ or change our destiny as being more than conquerors in Him.

vi. "Thus we are reminded of the fact that those who are the people of God are called upon to endure suffering for which there is no explanation at the time, and certainly none in their own disloyalty. Such sufferings are part of the high and holy privilege of fellowship with God." (Morgan)

4. (23-26) A plea and a hopeful prayer for help.

Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord?

Arise! Do not cast *us* off forever.

Why do You hide Your face,

***And* forget our affliction and our oppression?**

For our soul is bowed down to the dust;

Our body clings to the ground.

Arise for our help,

And redeem us for Your mercies' sake.

a. **Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast *us* off forever:** The psalmist had the depth of relationship with God to speak this freely, and God had the love and grace to not only hear it, but also to record such a prayer in His word. The psalmist openly spoke his

feeling that God had forsaken and forgotten a faithful Israel.

i. The psalmist did not actually believe that God was asleep, but it felt to him so. "This is a *freedom of speech* which can only be allowed to inspired men; and in their mouths it is always to be *figuratively* understood." (Clarke)

ii. This feeling or sense was powerfully captured when Jesus slept in the boat on the stormy Sea of Galilee. The disciples feared they would perish as He slept and cried out for Jesus to awake. "Although the picture of the sleeping Lord may seem naïve to us, it was acted out in the New Testament." (Kidner)

b. For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our body clings to the dust: In body and soul Israel was at the crisis point and in **the dust** of shame and defeat.

i. "They who are not brought into this state of humiliation by outward sufferings, should bring themselves into it by inward mortification and self-denial, by contrition and abasement, if they would put up such prayers as the Majesty of heaven will deign to accept and answer." (Horne)

c. Arise for our help, and redeem us for Your mercies' sake: The psalmist has stated Israel's problem as clearly and strongly as possible. We might expect him to be angry with God or to lose hope. Instead the psalm leaves him with trusting God even in his pain and disappointment. He made his final appeal not on the basis of what Israel deserved, but for the **sake** of God's mercy (lovingkindness).

i. **Arise for our help:** "A short, but sweet and comprehensive prayer, much to the point, clear, simple, urgent, as all prayers should be." (Spurgeon)

ii. "We mentioned our sincerity and constancy in thy worship only as an argument to move thee to pity, and not as a ground of our trust and confidence, or as if we merited deliverance by it; but that we expect and implore only upon the account of thine own free and rich mercy." (Poole)

Your Throne, O God, Is Forever

Psa 45:1 Beautiful words fill my mind, as I compose this song for the king. Like the pen of a good writer my tongue is ready with a poem.

Psa 45:2 You are the most handsome of men; you are an eloquent speaker. God has always blessed you.

Psa 45:3 Buckle on your sword, mighty king; you are glorious and majestic.

Psa 45:4 Ride on in majesty to victory for the defense of truth and justice! Your strength will win you great victories!

Psa 45:5 Your arrows are sharp, they pierce the hearts of your enemies; nations fall down at your feet.

Psa 45:6 The kingdom that God has given you will last forever and ever. You rule over your people with justice;

Psa 45:7 you love what is right and hate what is evil. That is why God, your God, has chosen you and has poured out more happiness on you than on any other king.

Psa 45:8 The perfume of myrrh and aloes is on your clothes; musicians entertain you in palaces decorated with ivory.

Psa 45:9 Among the women of your court are daughters of kings, and at the right of your throne stands the queen, wearing ornaments of finest gold.

Psa 45:10 Bride of the king, listen to what I say—forget your people and your relatives.

Psa 45:11 Your beauty will make the king desire you; he is your master, so you must obey him.

Psa 45:12 The people of Tyre will bring you gifts; rich people will try to win your favor.

Psa 45:13 The princess is in the palace—how beautiful she is! Her gown is made of gold thread.

Psa 45:14 In her colorful gown she is led to the king, followed by her bridesmaids, and they also are brought to him.

Psa 45:15 With joy and gladness they come and enter the king's palace.

Psa 45:16 You, my king, will have many sons to succeed your ancestors as kings, and you will make them rulers over the whole earth.

Psa 45:17 My song will keep your fame alive forever, and everyone will praise you for all time to come.

Psalms 45:1-17

Psalms 45 – The Anointed King and His Bride

The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies." A Contemplation of the sons of Korah. A Song of Love.** *These sons of Korah were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).*

*The phrase **Set to "The Lilies"** may refer to general beauty of the composition, to the tune, or even to a six-stringed instrument known as the Shoshannim (the literal translation of the Hebrew).*

In a roundabout way, C.S. Lewis saw this psalm pointing to Christmas: "The birth of Christ is the arrival of the great warrior and the great king. Also of the Lover, the Bridegroom, whose beauty surpasses that of man. But not only the Bridegroom as the lover, the desired; the Bridegroom also who makes fruitful, the Father of children

still to be begotten and born.” (C.S. Lewis, cited in Willem VanGemeren)

A. The Glory of the King.

1. (1) Ready to write this psalm.

**My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King;
My tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.**

a. **My heart is overflowing with a good theme:** The tone of this psalm is a **good theme**. There is a sense of joy and celebration throughout the psalm. Yet these words also hint that the psalmist had a sense of inspiration in writing this, as if the **good theme** *flowed up* within him.

i. “The language in this verse is so unusual that some commentators believe the poet is claiming special inspiration.” (Boice)

ii. “It is a sad thing when the heart is cold with a good matter, and worse when it is warm with a bad matter, but incomparably well when a warm heart and a good matter meet together.” (Spurgeon)

b. **I recite my composition concerning the King:** The idea is either that this psalm is *about* **the King** or it is *to* **the King**. It celebrates a royal wedding, but there is no firm place to connect it to a specific king in the royal House of David. Many older commentators regard the wedding as Solomon’s to the Princess of Egypt, but this is not certain.

i. At the same time, the text of the psalm itself and the way the New Testament quotes this psalm require us to regard its general tone and many of its specific lines to speak of the ultimate **King**, Jesus the Messiah.

ii. "By its language and its title, '*a love song*' the psalm comes as clearly into the category of literal wedding verse...yet speaks undoubtedly of Christ. It is proof enough that the one level of meaning need not exclude the other. But Eph 5:32 [and following] puts the matter beyond doubt." (Kidner)

iii. "We are to assume, then, that the poet is writing of a specific Jewish king, whose identity is unknown, but that he is also looking ahead and upward to that ideal promised King whose perfect and eternal reign was foreshadowed by the Jewish monarchy." (Boice)

iv. Maclaren noted that in the original it is **concerning a King**, without the specific article *the*. "The absence of the definite article suggesting that the office is more prominent than the person."

2. (2-5) *The beauty, majesty, and might of the bridegroom King.*

**You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.
Gird Your sword upon *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,
With Your glory and Your majesty.
And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of
truth, humility, *and* righteousness;
And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.
Your arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King's
enemies;
The peoples fall under You.**

a. **You are fairer than the sons of men:** This begins a poetic and powerful description of the King, praising and exalting Him both for who He is and what He does. The psalmist begins by simply noting the *beauty* of the King, saying He is more beautiful (**fairer**) than all others.

i. "This monarch is fairer than the sons of men. The note of superhuman excellence is struck at the outset." (Maclaren)

ii. We believe the emphasis here is on the character of the Messiah, on the beauty of His nature and personality. Isa 53:2 says that the Messiah was not remarkable for His physical appearance or beauty. Fulfilled in Jesus Christ, we can say there was never a more beautiful human being than Jesus of Nazareth.

iii. "His soul was like a rich pearl in a rough shell; like the tabernacle, goat's hair without, but gold within." (Trapp)

b. Grace is poured upon Your lips: The beauty of the King extends to His words, which are filled with **grace**. His grace-blessed **lips** speak grace-filled words.

i. This was marvelously true of Jesus Christ. In His early years it was said, *So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.* (Luk 4:22) Even the opponents of Jesus said, *No man ever spoke like this Man!* (Joh 7:46)

ii. "His word instructed the ignorant, resolved the doubtful, comforted the mourners, reclaimed the wicked, silenced his adversaries, healed diseases, controlled the elements, and raised the dead." (Horne)

c. Therefore God has blessed You forever: In the beauty of His character and the graciousness of His words, the King enjoys the blessing of God, and enjoys it **forever**.

i. The phrase, "**Therefore God**" also suggests that there is an aspect or dimension to deity that is not encompassed in the King spoken of in this psalm.

There is an aspect or dimension of **God** that deals with Him and blesses Him.

d. **Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One:**

The King is beautiful in character and speaks grace-filled words, but is nothing like a soft or effeminate man. This King is a man of war, a **Mighty One** armed with a sword.

i. The phrasing of this psalm is likely the source of some of the phrasing of John's description of Jesus returning in triumph in Rev 19:11-16.

ii. **O Mighty One:** "A title well-deserved, and not given from empty courtesy like the serenities, excellencies, and highnesses of our fellow mortals – titles, which are but sops for vain glory. Jesus is the truest of heroes. Hero worship in his case alone is commendable. He is mighty to save, mighty in love." (Spurgeon)

e. **In Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness:** The King is full of **majesty** and blessing, but not primarily out of conquest and force. It flows from His **truth, humility, and righteousness**.

i. "The 'splendor and majesty' speak of his past victories and the confident expectation of additional victories every time he marches at the head of his troops." (VanGemeren)

ii. "For thou neither didst obtain nor wilt manage thy kingdom by deceit or violence and unrighteousness, as the princes of the earth frequently do, but with truth and faithfulness, with meekness and gentleness towards thy people, and to all that shall submit to thee." (Poole)

iii. Spurgeon envisioned King Jesus riding a chariot pulled by three horses: "These words may be

rendered, *'ride forth upon truth and meekness and righteousness'* – three noble chargers to draw the war-chariot of the gospel." (Spurgeon)

f. Your right hand shall teach You awesome things:

In the thinking of ancient Israel, the **right hand** spoke of a person's strength and skill, because most people are right-handed. This means that the exercise of the strength and skill of the King teaches Him, and teaches Him **awesome things**.

i. Applying this to Jesus Christ may seem strange. We may wonder what **awesome things** Jesus learned through His own **right hand**. Heb 5:8 says of Jesus that *He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*. Jesus learned the practice of obedience in the fiery test of His own suffering. This was an exercise of His strength and skill, and one of the **awesome things** He learned.

g. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies: The weapons of the King are many. He not only has a **sword**, but also sharp **arrows**, ready and sent out against His **enemies**. His might brings the world into submission (**the peoples fall under You**).

i. Jesus shoots His arrows at **the heart**, and they are **sharp** – ready and able to pierce. "Peter's converts were pricked at heart; and Stephen's hearers were pricked at heart, Act 2:37; Act 7:54." (Trapp)

ii. "These arrows are spoken of in the plural because, while there are arrows of conviction, arrows of justice, arrows of terror, there are also arrows of mercy, arrows of consolation. While there are arrows that kill sin, there are also arrows that kill despair, which also is a sin; and as there are arrows that smite and slay our carnal hopes, so there are other arrows that effectually destroy our sinful fears; and all these

arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies,
there is not a blunt one in the whole quiver."
(Spurgeon)

3. (6-7) *God praises Messiah the King as God.*

**Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your
kingdom.**

**You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.**

a. **Your throne, O God, is forever and ever:** The King is praised and exalted as **God**. The description of Psa 45:2-5 might apply to a remarkable man who was nevertheless merely a man. As the description continued, it clearly refers to this King Himself as God, seated upon an eternal **throne**.

i. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews explained how these words specifically apply to Jesus (Heb 1:8-9). He noted not only that these words say that Jesus is the eternally enthroned God, but also *that God the Father regards Him so*. The writer of the Hebrews explained that prophetically, the sons of Korah gave us the words that God the Father spoke to God the Son.

ii. "Even the ancient Jewish translators regarded these words as referring to the Messiah." (Boice)

iii. "The faithfulness of the pre-Christian Septuagint in translating these verses unaltered is very striking." (Kidner)

iv. "From the earliest times it has been considered as definitely Messianic; and that by Jewish, as well as Christian expositors." (Morgan)

b. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom: This King's reign is not founded on mere aggression and conquest; it isn't merely a matter of might making right. His

kingdom is founded with **righteousness**, so much so that the symbol of His authority (**a scepter**) is **righteousness** itself.

c. You love righteousness and hate wickedness: The righteousness of His kingdom comes from the character of the King. It is the natural result of His **love** of righteousness and His **hate** toward wickedness. He doesn't have to work hard to make His kingdom righteous; it is in His nature and character.

d. Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness: Because of His great righteousness, Messiah the King receives a blessing from God. He is blessed with **the oil of gladness** – He is glad and satisfied, and that more than any other (**more than Your companions**). He is an anointed King.

i. It is true that Jesus was a Man of Sorrows, well acquainted with grief (Isa 53:3). Yet His work of righteousness – in all its fullness and dimensions – was rewarded as the most glad and satisfying work ever performed. Despite the sorrow and grief in His work, the accomplishment of Jesus' work left Him **anointed...with the oil of gladness**, and that more than any other person.

ii. "True, He was 'a man of sorrows,' but beneath His sorrow had abiding and central joy.... He, the saddest, was likewise the gladdest of men, and 'anointed with the oil of joy above His fellows.'" (Maclaren)

e. **Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You:** The Person of the anointed King is described in a fascinating way. In Psa 45:6 He Himself is addressed as **God**; now in Psa 45:7 the King is described as *relating to* God, from Whom He has received an anointing.

i. This is a strange statement – this King *is* God, and yet *receives from* God. Passages like this are the foundation for the idea of the Trinity – that there is One God who exists in Three Persons. This is the way to make sense of what seems to be contradictory statements in the Bible.

- That there is one God (Deu 6:4, Gal 3:20).

- That Three Persons are said to be God, and they relate to One another (here and many other passages).

ii. Psalms 45 shows a striking interaction between the Persons of the Trinity. “**God, Your God**” speaks of the Father and His position of authority over the Second Person of the Trinity. “**You**” refers to the Son. “**Anointed**” has in mind the ministry and presence of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.

iii. “The words of these two verses together are incomprehensible unless they are understood to refer to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Only he can be called God and at the same time the Father as his God.” (Boice)

4. (8-9) *The complete greatness of the anointed King.*

**All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes
and cassia,**

**Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made
You glad.**

Kings’ daughters *are* among Your honorable women;

At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

a. **All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia:** This is another reference to the beauty and pleasantness of the anointed King. In some way it could be said that *He smells good*, giving a more complete picture of His beauty and pleasantness.

i. We might imagine a very good-looking man of remarkable character, righteousness, and courage – who nevertheless smells bad and is therefore unpleasant to be around. Jesus isn't like that.

b. **Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad:** The psalmist thought of not just a palace but multiple **palaces**, so majestic that they were inlaid and decorated with **ivory**. We can think of majestic palaces worthy of Solomon in his splendor, pointing toward the white and pure dwelling place of God in heaven.

i. "*Ivory palaces* were so named for the inlays of ivory in their paneling and ornamentation." (Kidner)

ii. Looking to God's future work, **out of the ivory palaces** tells us that *the anointed King comes from heaven*. He is not only of earth, but came forth from **palaces** found only in heaven.

c. **King's daughters are among Your honorable women:** The anointed King is great not only for who He is, but also for those He associates with. The highest royalty (**king's daughters...the queen**) are the maids of honor at His wedding.

i. Prophetically speaking this reminds us that one measure of the greatness and majesty of Jesus is the greatness of the men and women through the centuries who have been His most devoted followers.

These were and are, men and women *of whom the world was not worthy* (Heb 11:38).

d. **At Your right hand stands the queen:** The wedding is about to begin, with the bride (**the queen**) standing in the place of honor next to the King.

i. "The bride was seated to the right of the king and was adorned with the valuable gold of Ophir, a proverbial fine gold (cf. 1Ki 9:28; 1Ki 10:11)."
(VanGemeren)

ii. "As Christ is at the Father's right hand, so the Church is at Christ's right hand; where, as his wife, she shineth with her Husband's beams." (Trapp)

B. The bride of Messiah the King.

1. (10-12) *Speaking to the bride of Messiah the King.*

**Listen, O daughter,
Consider and incline your ear;
Forget your own people also, and your father's house;
So the King will greatly desire your beauty;
Because He *is* your Lord, worship Him.
And the daughter of Tyre *will come* with a gift;
The rich among the people will seek your favor.**

a. **Listen, O daughter:** Now the psalmist turned to the bride and spoke to her. He had encouragement and guidance for her.

b. **Forget your own people also, and your father's house:** Using the concept of Gen 2:24, this was an invitation to this particular royal daughter to leave her people and her father's house to be joined to the anointed King in marriage.

i. If we knew nothing else of this King, we might think that this described a literal invitation of marriage to an actual woman to literally become His wife. Knowing

that Jesus of Nazareth is Messiah the King and that He was never married during His earthly life, we understand this connects with a familiar metaphor: the people of God as a wife of God, and the Church of Jesus as His bride.

c. **So the King will greatly desire your beauty:** One reason the King invited the royal daughter to marriage was He saw her as beautiful, and so desired her. Since the King's beauty was that of character (Psa 45:2), we can be sure that the bride's beauty included character.

i. Extending the analogy, Jesus – Messiah and King – sees the beauty of His people collectively, the Church – and He desires them in committed relationship, in the sharing of all things, in a future linked together.

ii. "Her beauty, so greatly desired and delighted in by Messiah, is spiritual; it is the beauty of holiness; and her clothing is 'the righteousness of saints' 1Pe 3:3; Rev 19:8." (Horne)

d. **Because He is your Lord, worship Him:** This has the sense of something greater than the normal respect due unto a husband, even a royal husband. This bride, this royal daughter, sees that her husband is also her **Lord** and worthy of **worship**.

e. **The daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will seek your favor:** Being joined to the anointed King in marriage means many benefits for this royal daughter. She receives **gifts** from the nations, and is set in such a high place that even the **rich** seek her **favor**. Normally others seek the favor of the rich; the anointed King has set her in an even higher place.

i. "The bride's submission to her partner as both husband and king goes hand in hand with the dignity

she also derives from him. His friends and subjects are now hers; she is gainer, not the loser, by her homage." (Kidner)

2. (13-15) *The glory of the companion of the anointed King.*

**The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace;
Her clothing is woven with gold.**

She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors;

The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You.

With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought;

They shall enter the King's palace.

a. **The royal daughter is all glorious:** Because she is joined to the anointed King in a relationship of committed love, great benefits come to the royal daughter. She is **all glorious**, and not because of herself but because of her connection with the King.

i. We can't help but read this with application to how Jesus sees *His* bride, and how she is in objective truth: **all glorious**. We see the Church and notice many flaws; Jesus looks at His blood-bought people and says, "**all glorious**."

ii. "Perhaps nowhere in Old Testament writings do we find a nearer approach to the disclosure of the secret of the Church than in this Psalm." (Morgan)

iii. **Within the palace:** "Within her secret chambers her glory is great. Though unseen of men her Lord sees her, and commends her. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **Her clothing is woven with gold:** She is clothed with valuable and beautiful clothing. She has several **robes of many colors**, which she wears in the presence of the King.

i. **Woven with gold:** "The different graces of the faithful, all wrought in them by the same Spirit, compose that divine 'embroidery' which adorns the wedding garment of the church, who is therein presented to the King, attended by the bridesmaids, after the nuptial manner." (Horne)

c. **The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You:** The royal daughter, wife to the anointed King, is accompanied by bridesmaids and together they come before the King for the wedding service.

i. "This escorting of the bride, *led to the king* in her finest attire while he awaits her in full state, is no superfluous formality: it is the acted equivalent of Paul's phrase 'to present you as a pure bride to her one husband' (2Co 11:2)." (Kidner)

ii. "In one sense they are a part of the church, but for the sake of the imagery they are represented as maids of honour; and, though the figure may seem incongruous, they are represented as brought to the King with the same loving familiarity as the bride, because the true servants of the church are of the church, and partake in all her happiness." (Spurgeon)

3. (16-17) *The legacy of the companion of Messiah the King.*

**Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons,
Whom You shall make princes in all the earth.
I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.**

a. **Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons,
whom You shall make princes in all the earth: A**

blessing is pronounced on the marriage of the anointed King. The **fathers** have passed away, but will be replaced by **sons** that come from the marriage. The King's legacy passes from generation unto generation. This ongoing work means that the **name** of the King will be **remembered in all generations**.

i. "It is the king who is addressed now; the *you* and *your* are masculine." (Kidner)

ii. The metaphors are a bit mixed, but the idea is clear. The union between the Messiah and His bride brings forth children who themselves are **princes in all the earth**. Many sons are brought to glory (Heb 2:10).

ii. "O church of God, think not thyself abandoned then, because thou seest not Peter, nor seest Paul – seest not those through whom thou wast born. Out of thine own offspring has a body of 'fathers' been raised up to thee." (Augustine, cited in Spurgeon)

b. Therefore the people shall praise You: The result of it all is that the anointed King is exalted and praised **forever and ever**. His choosing of a bride, granting great privileges to her, and giving a blessing that endures through generations all bring praise to Him.

i. "It is [because of] the glory of the Lord that we become ready to renounce all our own people and possessions that we may be wholly to His praise, and so the instruments through whom the royal race is propagated and the glory of the King made known, among the generations and the peoples." (Morgan)

ii. "Are we doing as the psalmist did? Do we praise him who has purchased us to himself to be his bride? Are we working to see that the nations come to honor him as well?" (Boice)

God Is Our Fortress

Psa 46:1 God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

Psa 46:2 So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken and mountains fall into the ocean depths;

Psa 46:3 even if the seas roar and rage, and the hills are shaken by the violence.

Psa 46:4 There is a river that brings joy to the city of God, to the sacred house of the Most High.

Psa 46:5 God is in that city, and it will never be destroyed; at early dawn he will come to its aid.

Psa 46:6 Nations are terrified, kingdoms are shaken; God thunders, and the earth dissolves.

Psa 46:7 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psa 46:8 Come and see what the LORD has done. See what amazing things he has done on earth.

Psa 46:9 He stops wars all over the world; he breaks bows, destroys spears, and sets shields on fire.

Psa 46:10 "Stop fighting," he says, "and know that I am God, supreme among the nations, supreme over the world."

Psa 46:11 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalms 46:1-11

Psalms 46 – Confident in God's Protection and Power

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song for Alamoth.** These **sons of Korah** were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).*

"An ode upon Alamothe, or concerning the virgins: possibly meaning a choir of singing girls." (Adam Clarke)

*Charles Spurgeon wondered if **Alamothe** referred to a high-pitched stringed instrument as suggested by 1Ch 15:20.*

"Comment on this great song of confidence seems almost unnecessary so powerfully has it taken hold on the heart of humanity, and so perfectly does it set forth the experience of trusting souls in all ages and tumultuous times." (G. Campbell Morgan)

"Luther, when in greatest distress, was wont to call for this psalm, saying, Let us sing the forty-sixth psalm in concert; and then let the devil do his worst." (John Trapp)

A. God present among His people.

1. (1-3) The help of God greater than any crisis.

**God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst
of the sea;
Though its waters roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah**

a. **God is our refuge and strength:** Many of the other psalms begin with a description of the psalmist's crisis. In Psalms 46, the poet begins with God's provision. He looked to God for help in difficult times and found it. He could say these things by experience:

- That God Himself was a place of **refuge**, as the cities of refuge protected the fugitive in Israel.
- That God Himself was **strength** for His people, being strong for them and in them.

- That God alone was his **refuge and strength**, not God *and* something or someone else.

- That God Himself was their **help** – not from a distance, but a **very present help**.

- i. **A very present help**: “The secret of the confidence is the consciousness of the nearness of God.” (Morgan)

- ii. This has nothing to do with the safety or strength inherent in the creature. “We may be as timid by nature as the coneys, but God is our refuge; we are as weak by nature as bruised reeds, but God is our strength.” (Spurgeon)

- iii. “All creatures, when in distress, run to their refuges, Pro 30:26 [*The rock badgers are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the crags*].” (Trapp)

- b. **Therefore we will not fear**: The psalmist applied the logic of faith. If God is a real **refuge, strength**, and **help** to His people, then there is no logical reason to **fear** – even in the biggest crisis (**though the earth be removed**).

- i. “Its robust, defiant tone suggests that it was composed at a time of crisis, which makes the confession of faith doubly impressive.” (Kidner)

- c. **The earth be removed...the mountains carried...the waters roar...the mountains shake**: The psalmist considered the most frightening, humbling natural phenomenon imaginable. He then made the reasoned estimation that God was greater than them all, and **fear** before these in some way robbed God of some of His honor.

- d. **Selah**: The greatness of thought in this psalm was and is worthy of pause and careful thought.

i. "It were well if all of us could say, '*Selah*,' under tempestuous trials, but alas! too often we speak in our haste, lay our trembling hands bewildered among the strings, strike the lyre with a rude crash, and mar the melody of our life-song." (Spurgeon)

2. (4-6) *The peaceful provision of God.*

There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,

The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High.

God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;

God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved;

He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

a. **There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God:** The psalmist pictured the abundant, constant provision of a **river** for Jerusalem. The image is significant because Jerusalem does not in fact have such a river, only a few small streams. Yet the prophets anticipated the day when a mighty river would flow from the temple itself (Eze 47:12, Rev 22:1). The future reality is already in the mind of the psalmist.

i. "We might almost translate, 'Lo! a river!' Jerusalem was unique among historical cities in that it had no great river. It had one tiny thread of water." (Maclaren)

ii. "With God the waters are no longer menacing seas but a life-giving *river*." (Kidner)

iii. The **river** flows and makes all the **city of God** happy.

- The **city of God** is **glad** because life-giving water is always present in that dry, semi-arid land.

- The **city of God** is **glad** because the river has many **streams**, a picture perhaps connected to the

rivers that watered the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:10-14).

- The **city of God** is **glad** because a **river** is sometimes a picture of *peace* (Isa 48:18; Isa 66:12). Jerusalem is in perfect peace.

- The **city of God** is **glad** because the city is secure, having one of the best defenses against an enemy besieging the city – guaranteed water.

b. **The city of God:** The connection is clearly with Jerusalem, the location of **the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High**. At the same time, the title "**The City of God**" lifts the concept to God's ideal, perfect city – the *New Jerusalem* (Rev 3:12; Rev 21:2).

c. **God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved:** All the blessing and provision of **the city of God** comes because of God's presence. Because of His presence she is more firmly set than the earth which may be moved (Psa 46:2). The city is so established because **God shall help her**.

i. "The promise *she shall not be moved* gains special force from the repetition of the same word, *moved*, used of the mountains and of the kingdoms." (Kidner)

ii. **Just at the break of dawn:** "As by the day-break the shadows and darkness are dissipated; so by the bright rising of Jehovah, the darkness of adversity shall be scattered." (Clarke)

d. **The nations raged...He uttered His voice, the earth melted:** As in Psalms 2, God pays no regard to the rage of the nations. At His mere **voice** the earth melts away.

3. (7) *The confident chorus.*

**The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah**

a. **The LORD of hosts is with us:** The idea behind the title *Yahweh Sabaoth* is that He is the commander of armies, both the army of His people and the armies of heaven. The title emphasizes His glory and might, connecting it with the idea that *this* glorious God is **with** His people.

i. **LORD of hosts:** "Under whose command are all the hosts of heaven and earth, angels and men, and all other creatures." (Poole) "In fact, the conception underlying the name is that of the universe as an ordered whole, a disciplined army, a cosmos obedient to His voice." (Maclaren)

b. **The God of Jacob is our refuge:** The title **God of Jacob** not only emphasizes the aspect of covenant, but also grace – in that Jacob was a rather shabby character, not known for his great holiness. *This* gracious and merciful God is an open **refuge** for His people.

i. **Is our refuge:** "The word *refuge*, here and in verse 11, is distinct from that of verse 1, and implies inaccessible height: hence [New English Bible] 'our high stronghold.'" (Kidner)

ii. In these two phrases we see God in two aspects. He is the King of the multitude, the community, of all **hosts**. He is also the God of the individual, with personal relationship even to a **Jacob**.

iii. **God of Jacob:** "When we say 'The God of Jacob,' we reach back into the past and lay hold of the Helper of the men of old as ours." (Maclaren)

B. The LORD exalted among the nations.

1. (8-9) *Beholding the works of the LORD.*

**Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has made desolations in the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariot in the fire.**

a. **Come, behold the works of the LORD:** If the dominant idea in the first section of the psalm was God as a refuge and help, here the emphasis shifts to a consideration of the glory of God.

i. "The recitation of the mighty acts of God plants deep in the memory of God's people the evidences of his care, protection, and providential rule."
(VanGemeren)

b. **Who has made desolations in the earth:** God is mighty to make **desolations** or to enforce peace, making **wars to cease**. The idea may be that God's people are invited to look over the field of battle after God has completely routed His enemies, and their instruments of war are scattered, broken, and burning.

i. "Since God's people have reason to be glad in distress because of God's presence, how much greater will be their joy when the causes of distress are no more!" (VanGemeren)

2. (10) *A word from God Himself.*

**Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!**

a. **Be still, and know that I am God:** The idea is not that the faithful reader should stop activity and stand in one place. The sense is more that argument and opposition should stop and **be still**. This is done in recognition of God's glory and greatness, as mentioned in the previous verse.

i. "In this verse there is a change of person, and Jehovah himself is introduced, as commanding the world to cease its opposition, to own his power, and to acknowledge his sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the nations." (Horne)

ii. The idea is something like this: "As you know the glory and greatness of God, stop your mouth from arguing with Him or opposing Him. Simply surrender."

iii. "*Be still*...is not in the first place comfort for the harassed but a rebuke to a restless and turbulent world: 'Quiet!' – in fact, 'Leave off!'" (Kidner)

iv. "In this setting, 'be still and know that I am God' is not advice to us to lead a contemplative life, however important that may be.... It means rather, 'Lay down your arms. Surrender, and acknowledge that I am the one and only victorious God.'" (Boice)

v. **Know that I am God:** "Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission. Hence, the bare consideration

that God is God may well be sufficient to still all objections and oppositions against the divine sovereign." (Edwards, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **I will be exalted among the nations:** The appropriately silenced man or woman of God can glory in God's exaltation. God's triumph will extend far beyond Israel to all **the earth**.

3. (11) *The confident chorus.*

**The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah**

a. **The LORD of hosts is with us:** We can have the confidence that the same God exalted in all the earth is **with us**. We need no more.

i. **Is with us:** "On the day he died John Wesley had already nearly lost his voice and could be understood only with difficulty. But at the last with all his strength he could summon, Wesley suddenly called out, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' Then, raising his hand slightly and waving it in triumph, he exclaimed again with thrilling effect, 'The best of all is, God is with us.'" (Boice)

b. **The God of Jacob is our refuge:** We leave the psalm with confidence and serenity. This is worthy of reflection, closing with **Selah**.

God Is King over All the Earth

Psa 47:1 Clap your hands for joy, all peoples! Praise God with loud songs!

Psa 47:2 The LORD, the Most High, is to be feared; he is a great king, ruling over all the world.

Psa 47:3 He gave us victory over the peoples; he made us rule over the nations.

Psa 47:4 He chose for us the land where we live, the proud possession of his people, whom he loves.

Psa 47:5 God goes up to his throne. There are shouts of joy and the blast of trumpets, as the LORD goes up.

Psa 47:6 Sing praise to God; sing praise to our king!

Psa 47:7 God is king over all the world; praise him with songs!

Psa 47:8 God sits on his sacred throne; he rules over the nations.

Psa 47:9 The rulers of the nations assemble with the people of the God of Abraham. More powerful than all armies is he; he rules supreme.

Psalms 47:1-9

Psalms 47 – Praising the King of All the Earth

*The title tells us both the authors and the audience of the psalm: **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.** Some believe that **the Chief Musician** is the LORD God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). Korah was a descendant of Levi (Exo 6:16-24), and therefore the **sons of Korah** were Levites. Most assume that the specific **sons of Korah** addressed here and in the titles of ten other psalms were Levitical singers in the tabernacle/temple ceremonies, and perhaps they were performers of the psalm rather than the authors of it.*

This is a wonderful psalm celebrating a great victory of a great King. Perhaps it was occasioned by the victory of a king such as Jehoshaphat (as in 2Ch 20:15-23), but there is no doubt that it prophetically has in mind the ascension of the Messiah to His throne and celebrates His reign over the whole earth. "In later Jewish usage Psalms 47 was utilized as part of the New Year's service." (Willem VanGemeren)

A. The King of all the earth blesses His chosen people.

1. (1) The command to praise.

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!

Shout to God with the voice of triumph!

a. **Oh, clap your hands:** The clapping of hands *draws attention* to something, usually as an outward expression of inward joy. The Bible uses it both in a negative and positive sense.

i. There is both clapping for praise (Psa 47:1, Psa 98:8, Isa 55:12) and clapping in derision (Job 27:23, Lam 2:15, Nah 3:19).

ii. This is a word for all nations, and “If they cannot all speak the same tongue, the symbolic language of the hands they can all use.” (Spurgeon)

b. **All you peoples:** This is a command to more than Israel or followers of God; it is a command to **all...peoples**. It is ultimately the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the peoples of the earth through his Descendant, the Messiah (Gen 12:2-3).

i. “Psalms 47 follows quite naturally after Psalms 46. Psalms 46 is focused on the security of God’s people, noting how God had delivered them from one of their great enemies. It challenged the nations to observe that deliverance and stand in awe before God. Now, in Psalms 47 God says to those same people: ‘Rejoice and be happy; the King of Israel is also the King of all the Earth.’” (Boice)

c. **Shout to God:** The note is strong and happy. The psalmist did not have in mind sleepy singing or whispered prayers.

i. Most people are not against shouting or enthusiastic outbursts; they simply believe there is a right and wrong place for such shouting. Sadly, many who think a loud exclamation is fine at a football game think it is a scandal in the church.

2. (2) *The reason for praise.*

**For the LORD Most High is awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.**

a. **The LORD Most High is awesome:** The psalmist presented this without proof, as a *self-evident fact*. He considered it obvious to everyone, as much as water is wet and fire is hot.

b. **He is a great King over all the earth:** Both the *office* and the *realm* are important. He is a **great King**,

in that He is the King of Kings and the highest monarch. His realm extends **over all the earth**, and He is sovereign in all places.

i. The pagan gods of the ancient world (Baal, Molech, Ashtoreth, and so forth) were imagined to be *territorial* gods. Their authority was limited to a nation or a region. The psalmist proclaimed that the LORD God is not like one of these imagined gods.

3. (3-4) *God's special care for His chosen.*

**He will subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.
He will choose our inheritance for us,
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah**

a. **He will subdue the peoples under us:** Here the psalmist spoke as one of God's chosen nation, Israel. He looked forward to the time when the righteous reign of the great King would be exercised over all the earth, and Israel would assume its destined place of leadership among the nations.

i. Without doubt, the psalmist knew that this great King would be the Messiah; yet he looked *ahead* to the hope of the Messiah. We look back at the fulfillment of the promise to send the Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the great King who will rule the earth and subdue the nations, granting believing Israel superpower status in the coming age.

b. **He will choose our inheritance for us:** The psalmist was confident in the wisdom and goodness of the great King. He was happy to let the great King **choose our inheritance**.

i. It is a glorious fact that our great King Jesus has chosen the inheritance of His people. Eph 1:3-6 is

just one passage that describes some of His choosing for us:

- He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.
- He chose us to be holy and blameless before Him in love.
- He chose us to be adopted as sons into His family.

ii. It is a wise prayer, to ask our great King Jesus to **choose our inheritance for us**. We often get into trouble by wanting to choose our own inheritance.

- We sometimes want to choose our own *blessings*. One has health, another has wealth, a third has great talents; each wishes he had what the other has. Yet it is far better to let God choose our blessings.

- We sometimes want to choose our own *calling*. One sees the calling of another and thinks that the calling of the other is better, or he wants to imitate the calling of another instead of running his own race.

- We sometimes want to choose our own *crosses*. We think that our own problems are so much worse than others, and we think that we could bear any number of crosses – *except* the one He chose for us.

iii. Charles Spurgeon thought that this was a psalm of David and not the sons of Korah – that David *wrote* it, but they *sang* it. He wrote, "Our ear has grown accustomed to the ring of David's compositions, and we are morally certain that we hear it in this Psalm." This may or may not be true, but certainly David knew that his King chose his inheritance at each stage of his life, and he showed contentment with the inheritance God chose for him:

- As an anonymous shepherd boy.

- As a warrior against Goliath.
- As a fugitive running from Saul.
- As a king over Israel.
- As a disciplined sinner.

c. **The excellence of Jacob whom He loves:** This explains *why* we can be at peace with the inheritance He chooses for us. We know that for Jesus' sake and because we are in Him, God is for us and not against us. He **loves** us as His chosen; because He chose us we are happy to let Him **choose our inheritance for us**.

i. "The Holy Land is called 'the excellency of Jacob,' or 'the pride of Jacob,' on account of its beauty, and the excellence and variety of its productions (see Deu 8:7-9; 2Ki 18:32).'" (Rawlinson)

ii. **The excellence of Jacob:** "*The pride of Jacob* is a brief way of saying 'Jacob's glorious land.'" (Kidner)

iii. **Whom He loves** provokes a question: *Why* does God so love Jacob? Why does God so love the church? Why does God so love the world? The answer is that the reasons for His love are in *Him*, and not in the ones whom He loves.

B. A call to praise the King of all the earth.

1. (5) *The fact of praise.*

**God has gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.**

a. **God has gone up with a shout:** The *going up* here refers to ascending to a royal throne. The idea is that the great King has taken His throne and therefore receives a **shout** of praise.

i. The idea is that God comes down from heaven to help and save His people, and when He goes back up

to heaven, He deserves praise and acclamation from His people.

ii. Jesus ascended the royal throne in heaven after He finished His work for us on the cross and proved it by the empty tomb. He can only go **up with a shout** because He came down in humility to fight for His people and to save them.

b. **The LORD with the sound of a trumpet:** In the world of ancient Israel, the **trumpet** made the strongest and clearest sound; it was the sound of victory. To honor God clearly and strongly for His victory on our behalf, the **sound of a trumpet** is heard.

2. (6-7) *The call to praise and the reason for it.*

Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
For God is the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with understanding.

a. **Sing praises:** In this context, this is almost a *command*. It is a fitting command in light of the glory of **the King of all the earth**. God might have given speech to humanity without the gift of song; there are some tone-deaf people in the world. What is the case of some might have been the case of all; but God gave the gift of song and music to men, and the highest use of this gift is to praise the God who gave it.

i. "Let a thousand people speak at once; all thought and feeling are drowned in hubbub. But let them sing together in perfect time and tune; both thought and feeling are raised to a pitch of energy else inconceivable." (Rawlinson)

ii. **Sing praises:** "A single word in Hebrew, with therefore a swifter, livelier impact." (Kidner)

iii. "This word is four times repeated in this short verse, and shows at once the earnestness and happiness of the people. They are the words of exultation and triumph. Feel your obligation to God; express it in thanksgiving." (Clarke)

b. **The King of all the earth:** The idea from the second verse is repeated for emphasis. God's glorious authority extends far beyond the land or people of Israel. He is the global God, the **King of all the earth**.

c. **Sing praises with understanding:** Praise is appropriately offered with singing and should also be made **with understanding**. God wants our worship to be intelligent and not mindless. It is not necessary to be smart to worship God, but we should worship Him with all our being, including our mind (Mar 12:30).

i. "We must not be guided by the *time*, but the *words* of the Psalm; we must mind the matter more than the music, and consider what we sing, as well as how we sing; the tune may affect the fancy, but it is the matter affects the heart, and that God principally eyes." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Sing praises with understanding:** According to Kidner, Paul had the Septuagint translation of this phrase in mind when he wrote in 1Co 14:15, *I will also sing with the understanding*.

iii. All in all, this psalm shows us how we are to praise God:

- Praise Him *cheerfully* when you *clap your hands* as an expression of your inward joy.
- Praise Him *universally* together with *all you peoples* who should praise the Lord.
- Praise Him *vocally* as you *shout unto God with the voice of triumph*.

- Praise Him *frequently*, as the idea of **sing praises** is repeated often. You cannot praise Him too much.
- Praise Him *intelligently*, as you are to **sing praises with understanding** and to know and proclaim the reasons for our praise.

C. The King of all the earth and the nations.

1. (8) The reign of the King.

**God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.**

a. **God reigns over the nations:** The LORD is not *King of all the earth* in only a passive or ceremonial sense. He **reigns over the nations** and moves history toward His desired destination.

b. **God sits on His holy throne:** When John had his heavenly experience as recorded in Revelation 4, 5, he described everything in heaven in relation to this occupied throne. The center of heaven – indeed, the center of all creation – is this occupied throne in heaven.

i. God **sits** upon the throne; it is not empty. He is not an empty or ceremonial ruler.

ii. It is **His** throne; it belongs to Him and to none other.

iii. It is a **holy** throne, where the holiness of God has been perfectly satisfied by the work of Jesus on the cross. Therefore, it is both a **holy throne** and a throne of grace (Heb 4:16).

2. (9) The King is exalted above the nations.

**The princes of the people have gathered together,
The people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth *belong* to God;
He is greatly exalted.**

a. **The princes of the people have gathered:** In the mind of the psalmist, the leaders of God's people gather to both receive and exalt the King of all the earth.

i. "The promise concerning the blessing of the tribes of the nations in the seed of the patriarch is being fulfilled; for the nobles draw the peoples who are protected by them after themselves." (Keil and Delitzsch)

ii. "The princes of the earth belong especially to God, since 'by him kings reign, and princes decree justice' (Pro 8:15)."

b. **The shields of the earth belong to God:** "The Septuagint translates this *hoi krataioi*, the strong ones of the earth.... The words refer to something by which the inhabitants of the earth are defended; God's providence, guardian angels, etc." (Clarke)

i. "It is the abundant fulfillment of the promise of Gen 12:3; it anticipates what Paul expounds of the inclusion of the Gentiles as Abraham's sons (Rom 4:11; Gal 3:7-9)."

Zion, the City of Our God

Psa 48:1 The LORD is great and is to be highly praised in the city of our God, on his sacred hill.

Psa 48:2 Zion, the mountain of God, is high and beautiful; the city of the great king brings joy to all the world.

Psa 48:3 God has shown that there is safety with him inside the fortresses of the city.

Psa 48:4 The kings gathered together and came to attack Mount Zion.

Psa 48:5 But when they saw it, they were amazed; they were afraid and ran away.

Psa 48:6 There they were seized with fear and anguish,
like a woman about to bear a child,

Psa 48:7 like ships tossing in a furious storm.

Psa 48:8 We have heard what God has done, and now we
have seen it in the city of our God, the LORD Almighty; he
will keep the city safe forever.

Psa 48:9 Inside your Temple, O God, we think of your
constant love.

Psa 48:10 You are praised by people everywhere, and your
fame extends over all the earth. You rule with justice;

Psa 48:11 let the people of Zion be glad! You give right
judgments; let there be joy in the cities of Judah!

Psa 48:12 People of God, walk around Zion and count the
towers;

Psa 48:13 take notice of the walls and examine the
fortresses, so that you may tell the next generation:

Psa 48:14 "This God is our God forever and ever; he will
lead us for all time to come."

Psalms 48:1-14

Psalms 48 – The City of the Great King

*The title of this psalm is **A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.** These **sons of Korah** were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).*

*Matthew Poole on **A Song**: "This Hebrew word schir may be here taken not simply for a song, but for a joyful song, as it is in Gen 31:27; Exo 15:1; Psa 33:3."*

A. The city of the Great King.

1. (1-3) The Great King and His city.

**Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,**

***In His holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
God is in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge.***

a. **Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised:** The psalmist began simply describing the greatness of God and His worthiness to be praised. He connected this praise with a place: Jerusalem, described as **the city of our God, in His holy mountain.**

i. **Great is the LORD:** He is great indeed.

- He is greater: *For God is greater than man* (Job 33:12).
- He is greatest of all: *For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods* (Psa 95:3).
- He is greatness itself: *His greatness is unsearchable* (Psa 145:3).

ii. "How great Jehovah is essentially none can conceive; but we can all see that he is great in the deliverance of his people, great in their esteem who are delivered, and great in the hearts of those enemies whom he scatters by their own fears. Instead of the mad cry of Ephesus, 'Great is Diana,' we hear the reasonable, demonstrable, self-evident testimony, 'Great is Jehovah.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **In His holy mountain:** The idea of Jerusalem as a **holy mountain** is a thought-provoking contrast to another holy mountain – Mount Sinai. Sinai was so holy that a fence kept God's people from it, lest they die (Exo 19:12-13). The New Testament develops this comparison and contrast between Mount Sinai and

Mount Zion (Jerusalem) in Gal 4:24-26 and Heb 12:18-24.

i. This reminds us that though the psalmist certainly had the literal, historic city of Jerusalem in mind, he was also carried away by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to also see the idealized city of Jerusalem, the city of God, the New Jerusalem (Rev 3:12; Rev 21:2). The two aspects do not cancel each other out; they compliment each other.

c. **Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north:** Commentators are divided on the meaning of this phrase. Many or most think it describes Jerusalem's situation mainly on the northern slope of Mount Zion, though this is contested. It's possible that by **sides of the north** the psalmist intended us to connect *literal* Jerusalem with God's heavenly city.

i. Isa 14:13 uses the phrase *the farthest sides of the north* to refer to heaven, the place where God is enthroned. "By an effective turn of phrase it portrays the literal Zion in terms of the heavenly one – the community whose king is God – by identifying it with *the far north*." (Kidner)

d. **Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion:** Jerusalem is idealized as elevated and the cause of joy for all peoples. Certainly, the redemption there won rescues people from every tribe and tongue (Rev 5:9).

e. **The city of the great King:** Ultimately, this is what makes Jerusalem wonderful. There are cities with better natural resources and more natural beauty. Yet there is only one **city of the great King**, the King of kings. He is present (**God is in her palaces**) and her defense (**her refuge**).

i. "The godly had a special feeling about Jerusalem that is beautifully and sensitively expressed in this psalm. They looked on the city, mountain, and temple as symbols of God's presence with his people."
(VanGemeren)

2. (4-7) *The troubled kings of the earth.*

**For behold, the kings assembled,
They passed by together.
They saw *it*, and so they marveled;
They were troubled, they hastened away.
Fear took hold of them there,
And pain, as of a woman in birth pangs,
As when You break the ships of Tarshish
With an east wind.**

a. **Behold, the kings assembled:** With God the refuge of Jerusalem (Psa 48:3), the **kings** of the earth came to it – yet they could not attack. Instead they **marveled** and **they were troubled**.

i. **They passed by together** may be too weak. The New International Version translates, *they advanced together*. "The united effort of the nations gave them confidence, best expressed by A.A. Anderson: 'they stormed furiously.'" (VanGemeren)

ii. **They saw...they marveled...they were troubled, they hastened away:** "In Hebrew the words are similar to the well-known report of Julius Caesar about his victories in Gaul: *Veni, vidi, vici* ('I came, I saw, I conquered'). Only here the kings did not conquer; they fled from the city in terror. The verbs literally say: 'They saw [Jerusalem is implied]; they were dumbfounded; they were overwhelmed; they fled in panic.' The fast pace of the language captures the confusion and fearful flight." (Boice)

iii. "As has been often noticed, they recall Caesar's *Veni, vidi, vici*; but these kings came, saw, were conquered. No cause for the rout is named. No weapons were drawn in the city." (Maclaren)

b. **Fear took hold of them there:** When they saw and understood the great King guarding His holy city, they were afraid to either attack the city or offend the King. They hurt like a **woman** in labor and they were scattered like **ships** in a storm.

i. "Even thus shall the haters of the church vanish from the field, Papists, Ritualists, Arians, Sceptics, they shall each have their day, and shall pass on to the limbo of forgetfulness." (Spurgeon)

3. (8) *The established city of the LORD.*

As we have heard,

So we have seen

In the city of the LORD of hosts,

In the city of our God:

God will establish it forever. Selah

a. **As we have heard, so we have seen:** This is a simple yet beautiful statement of God fulfilling His promises and working in the present day, not only in the past. We should be aware of the great things He has done in the past ages (**we have heard**) and pray with faith for great works to be done in our own time (**so we have seen**).

i. "Perhaps you were told of such special acts of God by your parents. As you learn to trust him, you should begin to experience such personal blessings yourself, and you should be able to say, 'As I have heard, so I have seen.'" (Boice)

b. **In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:** The repetition is for emphasis. *This city*

belongs to God. It is His city. **God will establish it forever.**

B. Responding to the Great King.

1. (9-11) Meditating on His mercies.

**We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness,
In the midst of Your temple.**

**According to Your name, O God,
So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;
Your right hand is full of righteousness.**

**Let Mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,
Because of Your judgments.**

a. **We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness:** The thought turns from a focus on the strength and majesty of God to a consideration of His covenant love (*hesed*, **lovingkindness**).

i. In his sermon *A Worthy Theme for Thought*, Charles Spurgeon thought of three different people in the church and how they should each think and speak more of the **lovingkindness** of the LORD.

- “Now, my dear sister, you have talked about that rheumatism of yours to at least fifty people who have been to see you; suppose you tell your next visitor about the lovingkindness of the Lord to you.”

- “Yes, my dear brother, we all know that trade is bad, for you have told us so, every day, for I do not know how many years. And you have always been losing money, though you had no capital when you started; yet, somehow or other, you have managed to have something left even now. Well, we know that old story; could you not change your note just a little, and talk about the lovingkindness of the Lord?”

- “Yes, my friend, I know that many professing Christian people are not all that they profess to be; I have heard you say soever so many times. You say also, ‘There is no love in the church.’ Well, so far as we can see, you are not overstocked with it. You say, ‘There is no zeal among the members,’ but have you any to give away to those who need it? Now, henceforward, instead of always harping on the faults and failing of God’s people – which, certainly, are numerous enough, but have not become any fewer since you talked so much about them – would it not be better to think and talk of the lovingkindness of the Lord?”

b. **In the midst of Your temple:** Being at the temple led the psalmist to consider the lovingkindness of God. In many ways the **temple** itself testified to the covenant love of God to His people.

- God’s covenant love was shown in providing a place to meet with Him.
- God’s covenant love was shown in providing even the nations a place to meet with Him.
- God’s covenant love was shown in providing an atoning sacrifice of a substitute.
- God’s covenant love was shown in providing a sacrifice to give thanks.
- God’s covenant love was shown in providing a place to receive prayer as sweet-smelling incense unto Him.
- God’s covenant love was shown in providing a place for Him to be enthroned among His people.

c. **According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth:** God’s name is filled with majesty and greatness; so is His **praise**. His

praiseworthy character is shown in His **righteousness** and **judgments**.

i. **Let the daughters of Judah be glad:** "*The daughters of Judah* are its cities and villages: cf., e.g., Jdg 1:27, Hebrew." (Kidner)

2. (12-14) *The city represents God's faithfulness.*

**Walk about Zion,
And go all around her.
Count her towers;
Mark well her bulwarks;
Consider her palaces;
That you may tell *it* to the generation following.
For this *is* God,
Our God forever and ever;
He will be our guide
Even to death.**

a. **Count her towers; mark well her bulwarks:** The psalmist asks us to take a tour of Jerusalem, noting its defenses, strengths, and **palaces** reflecting royal dignity.

b. **For this is God, our God forever and ever:** In these last two verses the city itself fades from view and we see God alone. All these marks of Jerusalem's glory and strength come from

God, and this should be told **to the generation following**. The same God that builds and beautifies Jerusalem is **our God forever and ever** and **will be our guide even to death**.

i. We can say "**forever and ever**" about God in a way that we cannot say it about anything else. "The landlord cannot say of his fields, these are mine, forever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, this is mine forever and ever. These possessions shall soon change masters; these possessors shall soon

minge with the dust, and even the graves they shall occupy may not long be theirs." (Burder, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **Even unto death:** "And after, too; for this is not to be taken [as] exclusive. He will never leave us, nor forsake us." (Trapp)

Why Should I Fear in Times of Trouble?

Psa 49:1 Hear this, everyone! Listen, all people everywhere,

Psa 49:2 great and small alike, rich and poor together.

Psa 49:3 My thoughts will be clear; I will speak words of wisdom.

Psa 49:4 I will turn my attention to proverbs and explain their meaning as I play the harp.

Psa 49:5 I am not afraid in times of danger when I am surrounded by enemies,

Psa 49:6 by evil people who trust in their riches and boast of their great wealth.

Psa 49:7 We can never redeem ourselves; we cannot pay God the price for our lives,

Psa 49:8 because the payment for a human life is too great. What we could pay would never be enough

Psa 49:9 to keep us from the grave, to let us live forever.

Psa 49:10 Anyone can see that even the wise die, as well as the foolish and stupid. They all leave their riches to their descendants.

Psa 49:11 Their graves are their homes forever; there they stay for all time, though they once had lands of their own.

Psa 49:12 Our greatness cannot keep us from death; we will still die like the animals.

Psa 49:13 See what happens to those who trust in themselves, the fate of those who are satisfied with their

wealth—

Psa 49:14 they are doomed to die like sheep, and Death will be their shepherd. The righteous will triumph over them, as their bodies quickly decay in the world of the dead far from their homes.

Psa 49:15 But God will rescue me; he will save me from the power of death.

Psa 49:16 Don't be upset when someone becomes rich, when his wealth grows even greater;

Psa 49:17 he cannot take it with him when he dies; his wealth will not go with him to the grave.

Psa 49:18 Even if someone is satisfied with this life and is praised because he is successful,

Psa 49:19 he will join all his ancestors in death, where the darkness lasts forever.

Psa 49:20 Our greatness cannot keep us from death; we will still die like the animals.

Psalms 49:1-20

Psalms 49 – What Money Can't Buy

*As are many of the songs in Book Two of the Psalter, this psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah**. These **sons of Korah** were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).*

"The teaching of the song is simple, and sublime, present, and perpetual." (G. Campbell Morgan) "This psalm touches the high-water mark of Old Testament faith in a future life." (Alexander Maclaren)

A. The limits of material wealth.

1. (1-4) Introduction to this psalm of wisdom.

**Hear this, all peoples;
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
Both low and high,
Rich and poor together.
My mouth shall speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart *shall give*
understanding.
I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will disclose my dark saying on the harp.**

a. **Hear this, all peoples:** The psalmist spoke to everyone, especially including **rich and poor together**. He hoped to guide those who were troubled about the wealth of the wicked.

i. There are four kinds of riches. There are riches in what you *have*, riches in what you *do*, riches in what you *know*, and riches in what you *are* – riches of *character*. The psalmist spoke of those who are only rich in the first way – the least important kind of wealth.

ii. "It is evident that he was conscious of the greatness of the thing he sang, in that he commenced by calling all people, of all classes, to listen." (Morgan)

iii. "Like most of the Wisdom writings, this psalm speaks to men in the common humanity, not only to Israelites in their special bond of covenant with God." (Kidner)

b. **My mouth shall speak wisdom:** Other psalms praise and pray to God; this psalm teaches **wisdom** and imparts **understanding**. The psalm will focus on the folly of trusting in wealth or envying others just for their wealth. It sets the present prosperity of those who don't know God in an eternal perspective.

i. VanGemeren wrote this regarding the somewhat long introduction to the heart of this psalm: "He keeps them in suspense by impressing on them the importance of the discussion."

c. **My dark saying:** The better translation is *riddle*. The psalmist wasn't interested in hidden, mystical knowledge but in things that were simply difficult to understand and perceive. He hoped that doing it **on the harp** might help the message to be better remembered.

i. "[New English Bible] paraphrases it well: 'and tell on the harp how I read the riddle.'" (Kidner)

ii. "The doctrine of life eternal, and the judgment to come, here more clearly delivered than anywhere else almost in the Old Testament, is a mystery." (Trapp)

2. (5-9) *What money can't buy.*

**Why should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?
Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
None of them can by any means redeem *his* brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
For the redemption of their souls *is* costly,
And it shall cease forever—
That he should continue to live eternally,
And not see the Pit.**

a. **Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me:** The psalmist made a contrast between himself and those he will mention in the following lines. *He*, in contrast to *them*, has no reason to **fear** in the **days of evil**.

i. "Days of evil to others cannot be so to me, for the presence of God transmutes the evil to good."

(Meyer)

b. **Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches:** When this psalm speaks of the rich, this is what it means. It isn't merely the possession of material things that makes one rich in the sense that Psalms 49 means it. It is to **trust** in that wealth and to **boast** in their riches.

i. This is simply idolatry. Though the Bible presents several godly rich men to us (such as Abraham and King David, who by modern measures would probably be billionaires), they were men who still trusted in the LORD and made their boast in Him. They did not **trust in their wealth** or **boast** in their **riches**.

- One can know if he puts his **trust** in his wealth if he finds too much peace and security by his accounts and holdings, and if he despairs when such things decline. He can ask the question, *What loss in life would most trouble me – material or spiritual?*

- One can know if he **boasts** in his riches if he finds deepest satisfaction in gaining and measuring his wealth and if he looks for ways to display his riches. He can ask the question, *What am I appropriately proud of – material things or spiritual things?*

- In general, God's answer to these things for the rich is to practice radical generosity – a way for them to declare their trust in the LORD and to guard against a boast in their riches.

ii. Boice pointed out that in some ways this psalm is a commentary on the story of the rich fool in Luk 12:15-21. Jesus applied the principle from that story: *So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*. Psalms 49 has in mind just that kind of man.

c. **None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:** The psalmist revealed the great limitation of the idolatry of trusting and boasting in material wealth – this idol is of no help in the spiritual world. Money itself can't rescue a soul because **the redemption of their souls is costly** – that is, beyond the ability of material things to purchase.

i. The **redemption of their souls** is a spiritual work, accomplished only by God's atoning sacrifice. This sacrifice began in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:21), was practiced among the patriarchs (Gen 22:13-14), and instituted in a sacrificial system (Leviticus 1-7). The concept of a substitutionary, atoning sacrifice was fulfilled and perfected by the work of Jesus at the cross (Isa 53:10-11, Heb 10:12 and many others). This spiritual work is what provides for the **redemption of their souls**.

ii. "And therefore all the money that hath been given for masses, dirges, trentals, etc., hath been cast away; seeing Christ is the only Redeemer, and in the other world money beareth no mastery." (Trapp)

iii. Voltaire was a French atheist and enemy of Christianity, and his popularity made him very wealthy. "Yet when Voltaire came to die, it is reported that he cried to his doctor in pained desperation, 'I will give you half of all I possess if you will give me six months more of life.'" (Boice) Voltaire died in despair.

iv. **Redeem...ransom:** "The *ransom* picture is doubly appropriate, since being held to ransom is as much the hazard of the very rich as redemption is the need of the very poor." (Kidner)

d. **That he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit:** Those who have the **redemption of their**

souls will **live eternally** and not **see the Pit**. Here we see the concept of *sheol* (**the Pit**) as more than just the grave, but the ultimate and empty destiny of those who reject God.

i. **The Pit**: "The Chaldee understandeth it of hell; to which the wicked man's death is as a trap-door."
(Trapp)

B. True wealth and the world to come.

1. (10-12) *Unreliable wealth, limited honor.*

For he sees wise men die;
Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
Their inner thought *is that* their houses *will last*
forever,
Their dwelling places to all generations;
They call *their* lands after their own names.
Nevertheless man, *though* in honor, does not remain;
He is like the beasts *that* perish.

a. **The fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others:** Much in the pattern of the writer of Ecclesiastes (6:1-2), the psalmist noted that we can't take our material wealth with us into the world beyond.

i. "Money is the monarch of this world, but not of the next." (Trapp)

ii. We can't take our material wealth with us to the world beyond, but there is a real sense in which we *can send it on ahead*. Jesus spoke of using our present material resources to store up treasure in heaven (Mar 10:21). Our material wealth can do us good in the world to come, but that happens through kingdom-minded generosity more than accumulation.

b. Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever: Hungering for some kind of immortality, they that trust in riches believe their estates will **last forever**, beyond their own life **to all generations**. They memorialize themselves by calling **their lands after their own names**.

i. "This is the ambition still of many, that take little care to know that their names are written in heaven; but strive to propagate them, as they are able, upon earth, Nimrod by his tower, Absalom by his pillar, Alexander by his Alexandria.... But the name of the wicked shall rot, Pro 10:7." (Trapp)

ii. "Common enough is this practice. His grounds are made to bear the groundling's name; he might as well write it on the water. Men have even called countries by their own names, but what are they better for the idle compliment, even if men perpetuate their nomenclature?" (Spurgeon)

c. Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain: Though a man may have some measure of **honor** through estates or descendants or memorials, *he still dies* – just like an animal dies.

i. Therefore, the truly wise man or woman does not trust in riches or boast in wealth. He prepares for eternity by trusting God and making their boast in the LORD.

ii. **He is like the beasts that perish:** "It is the ability to think and reason that sets human beings apart from the remainder of creation. Yet how animal-like we are when we fail to consider the shortness of our days and prepare for how we will spend eternity!" (Boice)

2. (13) Two paths to perish.

**This is the way of those who are foolish,
And of their posterity who approve their sayings.
Selah**

a. **This is the way of those who are foolish:** The psalmist noted that the **way** that values the material over the spiritual and that does not prepare for the world to come is **foolish** and will be revealed as so.

b. **And of their posterity who approve their sayings:** There is a second **foolish** way: to be a descendant of the one who trusted and boasted in riches and to

approve of his world view. This also is **foolish** and will be revealed as so.

i. **Of their posterity:** "Grace is not hereditary, but sordid worldliness goes from generation to generation. The race of fools never dies out." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Who approve of their sayings:** "Those who agree with their words, often benefiting from their power and prestige, will also die and be no more." (VanGemenen)

3. (14-15) *The dominion of the upright.*

Like sheep they are laid in the grave;

Death shall feed on them;

The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;

And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave,

For He shall receive me. Selah

a. **Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them:** The psalmist painted a ghastly picture. A man is buried like an animal (Psa 49:12) and death consumes his material body. Of their once-beautiful bodies, **their beauty shall be consumed in the grave.**

i. The idea is that the **upright** – those who did not trust or boast in riches – have a **beauty** beyond the material and therefore beyond the grave. Those whose beauty was mainly measured in mirrors and bank accounts will find that **their beauty shall be consumed in the grave.** *There is a better beauty to live for.*

ii. **Like sheep they are laid in the grave:** “Those fatlings of the world, these brainless yonkers, that will not be warned by other men’s harms, but walk on in the same dark and dangerous ways.” (Trapp)

iii. “Why *like sheep*? I answer, not for the innocence of their lives, but for their impotency in death; as if it had been said, when once death took them in hand to lay them in the grave, they could make no more resistance than a sheep can against a lion or a wolf.” (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning:** When that **morning** finally comes, those who did not trust or boast in wealth (**the upright**) will be justified. They will **have dominion** over those who lived and died with a focus on the material and with no urgency to prepare for the world to come.

i. "Yet there is a mastery over Sheol and death. It is found in uprightness." (Morgan)

c. **But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me:** The psalmist was confident that he was among the **upright**, and not among those who foolishly trusted and boasted in riches.

i. The one who trusted and boasted in riches had no power to ransom or redeem a soul (Psa 49:7-8). The psalmist understood that **God** and God alone had the power to **redeem my soul from the power of the grave**.

ii. God gave a similar staggering announcement in Hos 13:14 :

*I will ransom them from the power of the grave;
I will redeem them from death.
O Death, I will be your plagues!
O Grave, I will be your destruction!*

iii. **The power of the grave** is staggering. Every graveyard tells of the power that death has over humanity. Yet God is greater than the power of the grave, and in Jesus Christ we can even taunt the grave saying, *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?* (1Co 15:55).

iv. As a wisdom psalm, this shares many characteristics as the Book of Ecclesiastes. Yet the words **But God** begin a significant difference. "The great *But God...*(Psa 49:15) is one of the mountain-

tops of Old Testament hope...it brings out into the open the assurance of victory over death which Ecclesiastes leaves concealed." (Kidner)

v. **God will redeem my soul:** "We must remember that *redeem* is a commercial term, meaning 'to buy,' 'buy out,' or 'buy [a slave so that he or she need never again return to the marketplace].' Spiritually, it refers to God's work in buying us out of sin's marketplace and setting us free. Who can do this? No one but God." (Boice)

d. **For He shall receive me:** The assurance and confidence of the psalmist is worthy of note and should be taken as an example for us. He was confident that God would **receive** the one who trusted in Him and made his boast in the LORD.

i. "The *he* and *me* confirm that this is not salvation at arm's length, but face to face." (Kidner)

ii. "The word *receive* is more positive than it may sound to us; it is Enoch's word: 'God took him' (Gen 5:24).'" (Kidner)

4. (16-20) *Practical application of this wisdom.*

**Do not be afraid when one becomes rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;
For when he dies he shall carry nothing away;
His glory shall not descend after him.
Though while he lives he blesses himself
(For *men* will praise you when you do well for yourself),
He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They shall never see light.
A man *who is* in honor, yet does not understand,
Is like the beasts *that* perish.**

a. **Do not be afraid when one becomes rich:** This might seem like a strange way to phrase the matter. Most of us are not consciously **afraid** at the prosperity of another or when **the glory of his house is increased**. Yet the fears may come in subtle ways:

- Afraid because I think they prosper at my expense.
- Afraid because perhaps material things matter more than spiritual things do.
- Afraid because maybe God does not govern the universe as I believe He does.
- Afraid because maybe there is no reward for the righteous or punishment for the wicked in the world beyond; there is no moral government to the universe.
- Afraid because the jerks of the world won't get what is coming to them.

b. **When he dies he shall carry nothing away:** The psalmist assures us that our reasons for fear are unfounded. The fool who trusted and boasted in riches can take **nothing** with him to the world beyond. **His glory shall not descend after him**; all the glory he will ever deserve he has had in this life.

i. For the upright, the opposite is true; their glory shall ascend after them, and they will in some sense be brought to glory (Heb 2:10) and even obtain God's glory in the world to come (2Th 2:14).

ii. For those who trust and boast in riches, this world is the best they will ever have it. For the upright who look to God for their redemption, this world is the worst they will ever have it.

iii. **His glory shall not descend after him:** "His worship, his honour, his lordship, and his grace, will alike find their titles ridiculous in the tomb. Hell knows

no aristocracy. Your dainty and delicate sinners shall find that eternal burnings have no respect for their affectations and refinements.” (Spurgeon)

c. **While he lives he blesses himself...for men will praise you:** Yes, the men and women who trust and boast in riches are often pleased with themselves and others are pleased with them. Yet that is short-lived. Each will die, and **go to the generations of his fathers.**

i. **For men will praise you:** “The generality of men worship success, however it may be gained. The colour of the winning horse is no matter; it is the winner, and that is enough.” (Spurgeon)

d. **They shall never see light:** The psalmist only had a dim understanding of punishment in the world to come, but he knew it to be in some sense a place of darkness. This is reserved for those who are **in honor** yet do **not understand.**

e. **A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish:** The psalm ends by repeating the warning first given in Psa 49:12. It is the grave warning to those who may have **honor** in this world but no understanding. Their honor in this world will not preserve them in the next.

i. “The banker rots as fast as the shoe-black, and the peer becomes as putrid as the pauper.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “Oh that wicked rich men would think of this, before the cold grave hold their bodies, and hot hell hold their souls.” (Trapp)

God Himself Is Judge

Psa 50:1 The Almighty God, the LORD, speaks; he calls to the whole earth from east to west.

Psa 50:2 God shines from Zion, the city perfect in its beauty.

Psa 50:3 Our God is coming, but not in silence; a raging fire is in front of him, a furious storm around him.

Psa 50:4 He calls heaven and earth as witnesses to see him judge his people.

Psa 50:5 He says, "Gather my faithful people to me, those who made a covenant with me by offering a sacrifice."

Psa 50:6 The heavens proclaim that God is righteous, that he himself is judge.

Psa 50:7 "Listen, my people, and I will speak; I will testify against you, Israel. I am God, your God.

Psa 50:8 I do not reprimand you because of your sacrifices and the burnt offerings you always bring me.

Psa 50:9 And yet I do not need bulls from your farms or goats from your flocks;

Psa 50:10 all the animals in the forest are mine and the cattle on thousands of hills.

Psa 50:11 All the wild birds are mine and all living things in the fields.

Psa 50:12 "If I were hungry, I would not ask you for food, for the world and everything in it is mine.

Psa 50:13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

Psa 50:14 Let the giving of thanks be your sacrifice to God, and give the Almighty all that you promised.

Psa 50:15 Call to me when trouble comes; I will save you, and you will praise me."

Psa 50:16 But God says to the wicked, "Why should you recite my commandments? Why should you talk about my covenant?

Psa 50:17 You refuse to let me correct you; you reject my commands.

Psa 50:18 You become the friend of every thief you see, and you associate with adulterers.

Psa 50:19 "You are always ready to speak evil; you never hesitate to tell lies.

Psa 50:20 You are ready to accuse your own relatives and to find fault with them.

Psa 50:21 You have done all this, and I have said nothing, so you thought that I am like you. But now I reprimand you and make the matter plain to you.

Psa 50:22 "Listen to this, you that ignore me, or I will destroy you, and there will be no one to save you.

Psa 50:23 Giving thanks is the sacrifice that honors me, and I will surely save all who obey me."

Psalms 50:1-23

Psalms 50 – Judgment Begins Among the People of God

The title of this psalm (A Psalm of Asaph) tells us that it is the first of Asaph's psalms in the order of the psalter. Asaph was the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 16:7; 1Ch 25:6). 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.

A. The Mighty One and His judgment.

1. (1-3) The Mighty One comes to judge the earth.

**The Mighty One, God the LORD,
Has spoken and called the earth
From the rising of the sun to its going down.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God will shine forth.
Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent;
A fire shall devour before Him,
And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.**

a. **The Mighty One, God the LORD:** Asaph the psalmist began by referring to God in terms of utmost majesty, using several of the words or names in Scripture to refer to the God who is really there.

- **The Mighty One:** "El stands for the might of God simply and absolutely." (Morgan)

- **God:** "Elohim, the plural form, intensifies that idea; and in use always connotes the wisdom of God as well as His might." (Morgan)

- **The LORD:** "Jehovah [*Yahweh*] is the title by which He is ever revealed in His grace." (Morgan)

- i. "The first three words of the Hebrew text emphasize that it is God who has spoken: El (= God), Elohim (= God), Yahweh (= LORD)." (VanGemeren)

- ii. "The psalm begins with a majestic heaping together of the Divine names, as if a herald were proclaiming the style and titles of a mighty king at the opening of a solemn assize.... Each name has its own force of meaning. *El* speaks of God as mighty; *Elohim*, as the object of religious fear; *Jehovah*, as the self-existent and covenant God." (Maclaren)

b. **Has spoken and called the earth:** The idea is that God has come to Jerusalem to judge the world, and the entire **earth – from the rising of the sun to its going down**– is gathered for that purpose.

c. **Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him:** Using reminders of God coming to Mount Sinai (Exo 19:16-19), Asaph built anticipation for the righteous judgment of God about to be performed. This time God comes to Zion, not Sinai.

- i. "In this powerful psalm the imagined scene is a theophany, God appearing in fire and tempest at Mount Zion to summon the entire world to His

judgment seat. But if all eyes are on Him, His eyes are on Israel." (Kidner)

ii. "Fire is the emblem of justice in action, and the tempest is a token of his overwhelming power." (Spurgeon)

2. (4-6) *The scope of judgment narrows to the people of God.*

**He shall call to the heavens from above,
And to the earth, that He may judge His people:
"Gather My saints together to Me,
Those who have made a covenant with Me by
sacrifice."
Let the heavens declare His righteousness,
For God Himself *is* Judge. Selah**

a. **That He may judge His people:** As God assembled **heavens** and **earth** for His judgment, He did not begin among the nations. God began His judgment among **His people** – His **saints**, those **who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice**.

i. "Suddenly – for it emerges with the last word of verse 4 – the tables are turned. Israel has appealed to God, only to find that she is herself the one on trial." (Kidner)

ii. In the psalm this feels like a surprise, but it shouldn't be. Many centuries later the Apostle Peter described the principle: *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1Pe 4:17)*

b. **Gather My saints together to Me:** God gathers His saints for judgment *before the witnessing world*. When God deals thus with His people, He often does it before a watching world. We would prefer that He deal with the

sins of His people privately, but if they will not listen to His correction, the day will come when He deals with their sin with the earth as an audience.

c. **Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice:** It can be argued that Psalms 50 only has in direct view God's judgment of Israel because it is the nation joined to Him in covenant as described here (Exo 19:5-6; Exo 24:5-8). Yet by extension (and the principle of 1Pe 4:17), this has all the people of God in view. Both aspects are true.

i. *"'Made,' or ratifying a covenant; literally, cutting, striking, perhaps in allusion to the practice of slaying and dividing victims as a religious rite, accompanying solemn compacts."* (Alexander, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. Believers will not face a judgment regarding their eternal destiny; they have trusted in Jesus and His work for them and are saved. However, they will face what Paul called *the judgment seat of Christ* (Rom 14:10 and 2Co 5:10), where their works and motives *as believers* will be judged – presumably, for the sake of reward and measure of authority in the age to come.

d. **Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge:** God most certainly will judge the earth, including all the wicked, and He will do so in **righteousness**. Yet He absolutely has the right to begin His judgment among His own.

B. The judgment of God against His people.

1. (7-15) *Rebuking their ritualism.*

**"Hear, O My people, and I will speak,
O Israel, and I will testify against you;
I am God, your God!
I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices**

**Or your burnt offerings,
Which are continually before Me.
I will not take a bull from your house,
Nor goats out of your folds.
For every beast of the forest *is* Mine,
And the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the mountains,
And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell you;
For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness.
Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats?
Offer to God thanksgiving,
And pay your vows to the Most High.
Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”**

a. **Hear, O My people, and I will speak:** The point from the previous lines is repeated and emphasized. God speaks here to His people, beginning His judgment among them.

i. **I am God, your God:** “And should, therefore, have been better obeyed.” (Trapp)

ii. “The law began with, ‘I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,’ and now the session of their judgment opens with the same reminder of their singular position, privilege, and responsibility. It is not only that Jehovah is God, but *thy* God, O Israel.” (Spurgeon)

b. **I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings:** God did not **rebuke** His people for offering sacrifices. He commanded them to do that. Yet, He was not interested in receiving *more* animal offerings (**I will not take a bull from your house, nor goats from your folds**) *apart from* their trusting obedience.

This was a rebuke of ritualism, of empty repetition of religious ceremonies.

i. God spoke to their ritualism first, because it was under ritualism that they excused the sin described later in the psalm and thought themselves approved before God. "Why, at the first signs of His displeasure (50:7), do their thoughts fly to points of ritual, not of relationship?" (Kidner)

ii. The practice of sacrifice under the Old Covenant might easily become a mere ritual and empty formality. The one bringing the sacrifice might forget the principle of transferring sin to an innocent victim and how the lifeblood had to be poured out in death as a substitute. "The sacrifices under the Jewish law were of God's appointment; but now that the people began to put their trust in them, God despised them." (Clarke)

iii. "What he intended for their instruction, they made their confidence." (Spurgeon)

iv. Believers under the New Covenant no longer offer animal sacrifices, but they are still tempted to practice their Christian duties in a spirit of ritualism. This must be actively avoided; God is not pleased by our ritualism.

v. "This was afterwards the sin of the Pharisees, is still of the Papists, and of too many carnal gospellers, who think they have served God, for they have been at church, done their devoir, for they have said their prayers, etc." (Trapp)

vi. **I will not take a bull from your house:** Understanding the modern slang or street use of the word *bull*, we may smile at the unintended truth in

the Revised Standard Version's translation, *I will accept no bull from your house*.

c. **For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills:** With a little thought, it's easy to see how ritualism does not please God. He has no *need* for the meat of sacrificed animals; **if I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine and all its fullness**. When we sacrifice to God, we don't give Him something He doesn't have; our sacrifice is for *our sake* and not His. Ritualism defeats its work for our sake.

i. "All sacrifices are God's before they are offered, and do not become any more His by being offered. He neither needs nor can partake of material sustenance. But men's hearts are not His without their glad surrender." (Maclaren)

ii. "Do men fancy that the Lord needs banners, and music, and incense, and fine linen? If he did, the stars would emblazon his standard, the winds and the waves become his orchestra, ten thousand times ten thousand flowers would breathe forth perfume, the snow should be his alb, the rainbow his girdle, the clouds of light his mantle. O fools and slow of heart, ye worship ye know not what!" (Spurgeon)

iii. "'If I were hungry,' etc. Pagan sacrifices were considered as feasts of the gods." (Cresswell, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. **The cattle on a thousand hills:** There's a story – which may or may not be true, but is a good illustration – that shortly after Dallas Seminary was founded in the 1920s, it almost closed because of bankruptcy. The founders met for prayer and one of them was Harry Ironside. When it was his turn to pray, he said, "Lord we know that the cattle on a

thousand hills are Thine. Please sell some of them and send us the money.” As the story goes, just then a Texas rancher came into the business office with a check from two carloads of cattle he had just sold. The secretary came into the office where the founders prayed, told them what happened and presented the check – it was for just the amount they needed to keep the seminary going. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder and president of the school, turned to Dr. Ironside and said, “Harry, God sold the cattle.”

d. Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble:

God described what He wanted more than rituals of sacrifice. He wanted a thankful heart, a life of obedience, and a living trust in Him. This God rewards; to this He says, **I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.**

i. “The glorious God cares nothing for pomp and show; but when you call upon him in the day of trouble, and ask him to deliver you, there is meaning in your groan of anguish.... God prefers the prayer of a broken heart to the finest service that ever was performed by priests and choirs.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Spurgeon preached a sermon on Psa 50:15 and titled it, *Robinson Crusoe’s Text*. Spurgeon recounted how in DeFoe’s book that after the shipwreck and on the island, Crusoe was about to die from illness. “He is ready to perish. He had been accustomed to sin, and had all the vices of a sailor; but his hard case brought him to think. He opens a Bible which he finds in his chest, and he lights upon this passage, ‘*Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*’ That night he prayed for the first time in his life, and ever after there was in him a

hope in God, which marked the birth of the heavenly life." (Spurgeon)

2. (16-21) *Rebuking their disobedience to His commands.*

But to the wicked God says:

"What *right* have you to declare My statutes,

Or take My covenant in your mouth,

Seeing you hate instruction

And cast My words behind you?

When you saw a thief, you consented with him,

And have been a partaker with adulterers.

You give your mouth to evil,

And your tongue frames deceit.

You sit *and* speak against your brother;

You slander your own mother's son.

These *things* you have done, and I kept silent;

You thought that I was altogether like you;

***But* I will rebuke you,**

And set *them* in order before your eyes.

a. **But to the wicked God says:** We might think that now God has turned away from judging His people for their ritualism and has turned toward the nations, to judge them for their wickedness. This isn't the case, as the following references to declaring God's **statutes** and taking His **covenant** show. He speaks to **the wicked** among the people of God.

i. "Formalism is a sin against God. Hypocrisy is its outcome, a sin against man, and so still against God." (Morgan)

ii. "The real problem with ritual is that, if forms are all there is to our religion, they give us feelings of being right with God when actually we may be guilty of the most terrible sins." (Boice)

b. **What right have you to declare My statutes:** God questioned their right to speak forth His word when their lives were stuck in fundamental disobedience. Their words (**declare My statutes...My covenant in your mouth**) spoke of God, but their lives dishonored Him.

i. **To declare My statutes:** "This verse may well refer to the public law-reading commanded in Deu 31:10 ff." (Kidner)

ii. **What right have you to declare My statutes:** "Origen, after his foul fall, opening the book and lighting upon this text, was not able to preach, but broke out into abundance of tears." (Trapp)

c. **Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you:** Their lives showed a hatred and disregard for the word of God, no matter what their words said. How they lived spoke louder to God than what they said.

d. **When you saw a thief...partaker with adulterers...tongue frames deceit:** They had specifically broken many of God's commandments, including the eighth, seventh, and ninth commandments. This was another way they displeased God, in addition to the ritualism mentioned in the previous lines.

i. "The particular charges are representative of the whole Decalogue." (VanGemeren)

ii. **You consented with him:** "It is true that the people who have broken the seventh, eighth, and ninth commandments have broken the whole covenant. But it is also true that those who associate with covenant breakers fall under the same condemnation! Sin lies both in the act and in the consent." (VanGemeren)

e. **You thought that I was altogether like you:** In some ways this was their greatest sin, losing sight of the

holiness of God. The main idea behind the concept of the *holy* is separation. In thinking that God **was altogether like you**, they considered Him more like a super-man instead of who He actually is: a holy God, enthroned in the heavens. They had become too casual and easy in their relationship with God.

i. One way that they forgot God's holiness was in mistaking His patience and longsuffering for not caring about sin (**these things you have done, and I kept silent**). We often make the same mistake and confuse the generous space God gives for confession and repentance to mean that He doesn't really care about our sin.

ii. **I kept silent**: "God's silence is an emphatic way of expressing His patient tolerance of evil unpunished. Such 'longsuffering' is meant to lead to repentance, and indicates God's unwillingness to smite. But, as experience shows, it is often abused." (Maclaren)

iii. "A wonderful thing is that silence of God, that longsuffering with sinners and another wonderful thing is the impudent interpretation which the sinner gives to that silence." (Spurgeon)

f. **But I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes**: They had misjudged God's graciousness and forgotten His holiness. In His love, God would not allow that to continue among His people. He would **set them in order before your eyes**.

3. (22-23) *Conclusion: The urgency to get right with God.*

**"Now consider this, you who forget God,
Lest I tear you in pieces,
And there be none to deliver:
Whoever offers praise glorifies Me;**

**And to him who orders *his* conduct *aright*
I will show the salvation of God."**

- a. **Consider this, you who forget God:** Graciously, God offered those who **forget** Him an opportunity to **consider** and change their thinking and their ways before He comes to them in the judgment described in the first few verses of this psalm.
- b. **Whoever offers praise glorifies Me:** This speaks to the aspect of forsaking ritualism and coming to God not in empty ceremonies but in surrendered heart.
 - i. **Whoever offers praise:** "The phrase 'he who sacrifices a thanksgiving,' while it leaves room for a literal sacrifice, is suggestive of an offering of pure praise." (Kidner)
- c. **Who orders his conduct aright:** This speaks to the aspect of forsaking the hypocrisy and wickedness and coming to God in confession and repentance.
- d. **I will show the salvation of God:** Performing these two things – forsaking ritualism and shunning wicked hypocrisy – even those do not *earn* the saint salvation. It simply puts them in a place to receive what God reveals and gives: **the salvation of God.**

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

Psa 51:1 Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins!

Psa 51:2 Wash away all my evil and make me clean from my sin!

Psa 51:3 I recognize my faults; I am always conscious of my sins.

Psa 51:4 I have sinned against you—only against you—and done what you consider evil. So you are right in judging

me; you are justified in condemning me.

Psa 51:5 I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful.

Psa 51:6 Sincerity and truth are what you require; fill my mind with your wisdom.

Psa 51:7 Remove my sin, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Psa 51:8 Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness; and though you have crushed me and broken me, I will be happy once again.

Psa 51:9 Close your eyes to my sins and wipe out all my evil.

Psa 51:10 Create a pure heart in me, O God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me.

Psa 51:11 Do not banish me from your presence; do not take your holy spirit away from me.

Psa 51:12 Give me again the joy that comes from your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

Psa 51:13 Then I will teach sinners your commands, and they will turn back to you.

Psa 51:14 Spare my life, O God, and save me, and I will gladly proclaim your righteousness.

Psa 51:15 Help me to speak, Lord, and I will praise you.

Psa 51:16 You do not want sacrifices, or I would offer them; you are not pleased with burnt offerings.

Psa 51:17 My sacrifice is a humble spirit, O God; you will not reject a humble and repentant heart.

Psa 51:18 O God, be kind to Zion and help her; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Psa 51:19 Then you will be pleased with proper sacrifices and with our burnt offerings; and bulls will be sacrificed on your altar.

Psalms 51:1-19

Psalms 51 – Restoration of a Broken and Contrite King

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the Prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.** The events are plainly and painfully described in 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12.*

James Montgomery Boice noted that this psalm has been long beloved by believers: "It was recited in full by Sir Thomas More and Lady Jane Grey when they were on the scaffold in the bloody days of Henry VIII and Queen Mary. William Carey, the great pioneer missionary to India, asked that it might be the text of his funeral sermon."

"This great song, pulsating with the agony of a sin-stricken soul, helps us to understand the stupendous wonder of the everlasting mercy of our God." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. Sin confessed, and forgiveness requested.

1. (1-2) The direct plea for mercy.

**Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.**

a. **Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness:** The title of this psalm gives the tragic context for David's plea. He had sinned in murder, in adultery, in covering his sin, and in hardness against repentance. It took the bold confrontation of Nathan the Prophet to shake him from this (2 Samuel 12); yet once shaken, David came in great honesty and brokenness before God.

i. **Have mercy upon me, O God** is the prayer of a man who knows he has sinned and has stopped all self-justification. David said to Nathan, *I have sinned against the LORD (2Sa 12:13)* – a good and direct confession, without excuse and with clarity.

ii. David asked for **mercy**, and that **according to** the measure of God's **lovingkindness**. This is God's *hesed*, His loyal love, His covenant mercy. It was a well-phrased request with the eloquence of true brokenness.

b. **According to the multitude of Your tender mercies**: In slightly different words, David repeated the thought of the previous appeal. He had before experienced the **multitude** of God's **tender mercies**; he asks for this outpouring again.

i. **Multitude of Your tender mercies**: "Men are greatly terrified at the multitude of their sins, but here is a comfort – our God hath multitude of mercies. If our sins be in number as the hairs of our head, God's mercies are as the stars of heaven." (Symson, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. David used several words to speak of the kindness he desired from God. "*Mercy* denotes God's loving assistance to the pitiful. *Unfailing love* [**lovingkindness**] points to the continuing operation of this mercy. *Compassion* [**tender mercies**] teaches that God feels for our infirmities." (Boice)

c. **Blot out my transgressions**: David felt a register of his many sins condemned him, and he wanted the account of them to be erased. The blotting out may refer to David's own conscience, or to God's accounting of sin – or perhaps to both.

i. **Blot out my transgressions:** "The plea, *blot out*, means 'wipe away,' like the writing from a book (cf. Exo 32:32; Num 5:23).\" (Kidner)

ii. **Blot out my transgressions:** "Out of thy debt-book; cross out the black lines of my sins with the red lines of Christ's blood; cancel the bond, though written in black and bloody characters.\" (Trapp)

d. **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity:** The word of God through Nathan the Prophet worked like a mirror to show David how dirty and stained he was. He had lived in that condition for some time (perhaps a year) without an acute knowledge of his **iniquity** and **sin**. Now the sense of the stain drove him to beg to be cleansed.

i. "*Wash me thoroughly*, Hebrew *multiply to wash me*; by which phrase he implies the greatness of his guilt, and the insufficiency of all legal washings, and the absolute necessity of some other and better thing to wash him.\" (Poole)

ii. **Wash me thoroughly:** "The word employed is significant, in that it probably means washing by kneading or beating, not by simple rinsing.\" (Maclaren)

iii. **Wash me thoroughly:** "To be cleansed not only from outward defilements, but from his swinish nature; for though a swine be washed never so clean, if she retain her nature, she will be ready to wallow in the next guzzle.\" (Trapp)

iv. David used several words to speak of his offense against God.

- **Transgressions** has the idea of crossing a boundary.

- **Iniquity** has the idea of twistedness or perversion.

- **Sin** has the idea of falling short or missing the mark.

2. (3-4) *The open confession of sin.*

**For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.**

a. **I acknowledge my transgressions:** David realized it was not only one, but multiple **transgressions**. He did this without excuse, blame-shifting, or rationalization.

i. "The author is fully aware of his condition before God. He confesses 'I know' with an emphasis on 'I.' He knows himself intimately and sees how rebellious he has been." (VanGemeren)

b. **My sin is always before me:** In the many months between the time David committed these sins and this confession, he had not escaped the sense of sin – it was **always before** him. He did his best to ignore it and deny it, but as a genuine child of God he could not escape it. He was in unconfessed sin, but *miserable* in it, as a child of God should be.

i. David didn't say, "My punishment is ever before me," or "My consequences are ever before me." What bothered him was his **sin**. Many grieve over the consequences of sin, but few over sin itself.

ii. **Is ever before me:** "To my great grief and regret, my conscience twitteth me with it, and the devil layeth it in my dish." (Trapp)

iii. We remember that David suffered this agony *as a king*. "The riches, the power, and the glory of a kingdom, can neither prevent nor remove the

torment of sin, which puts the monarch and the beggar upon a level." (Horne)

iv. **My sin:** "We note, too, how the psalmist realises his personal responsibility. He reiterates 'my' – 'my transgressions, my iniquity, my sin.' He does not throw blame on circumstances, or talk about temperament or maxims of society or bodily organisation. All these had some share in impelling him to sin; but after all allowance made for them, the deed is the doer's, and he must bear its burden." (Maclaren)

c. **Against You, You only, have I sinned:** In an objective sense this was not true. David had sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, their families, his family, his kingdom, and in a sense even against his own body (1Co 6:18). Yet all of that faded into the background as he considered the greatness of his sin against God. He rightly felt as if, **against You, You only, have I sinned.**

d. **And done this evil in Your sight:** David realized that God was there and God was looking when he did his **evil**. He was not absent from the bedroom of adultery or the place where the command to kill Uriah was given.

i. "David felt that his sin was committed in all its filthiness while Jehovah himself looked on. None but a child of God cares for the eye of God." (Spurgeon)

e. **That You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge:** David's confession of sin was not only to relieve himself of the great burden of his sin and guilt. More so, it was to bring glory to God. In confessing his sin, David hoped to confirm God's justice and holy character, proving that His commands were good and just *even when David broke those commands.*

3. (5-6) *The depth of David's need.*

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,

And in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,

And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.

a. **I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me:** David wasn't born out of a sinful relationship; that isn't his idea. Neither is his idea to *excuse* his sin by saying, "Look how bad I started out – what else could be expected?" The purpose was to show the *depths* of his sin, that it went beyond specific sinful actions all the way to a stubborn sin nature, one he was born with.

i. "The act of sin is traced back to its reason in the pollution of the nature." (Morgan)

ii. From this and similar passages we gain the Biblical idea of *original sin* – the idea that all humans are born sinners, receiving a sinful nature as sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. "This verse is both by Jewish and Christian, by ancient and later, interpreters, generally and most truly understood of original sin." (Poole)

iii. "It is a wicked wresting of Scripture to deny that original sin and natural depravity are here taught. Surely men who cavil at this doctrine have need to be taught of the Holy Spirit what be the first principles of the faith." (Spurgeon)

b. **You desire truth in the inward parts:** Though the sin nature was deep within David, God wanted to work deeply in him. God wanted a transformation in David all the way to **the inward parts**, to **the hidden part** that

would know wisdom. David did not cry out for a superficial reform, but something much deeper.

i. "Oh! Delude not yourselves with the thought that you have holy desires unless you truly have them. Do not think your desires are true towards God unless they are really so: he desireth truth in our desires."
(Spurgeon)

B. Prayers for restoration.

1. (7-9) Restoration through the blood of sacrifice.

**Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.**

a. **Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:**
David looked for *God* to do a work of spiritual and moral cleansing, and to do it in connection with the atoning sacrifice of a substitute. **Hyssop** was used to apply the blood of the Passover lamb (Exo 12:22). **Hyssop** was also used to sprinkle the priest's purifying water (Num 19:18).

i. In the Levitical law it was the priests who used the **hyssop** to sprinkle the purifying water. "Here the psalmist petitions the Lord to be his priest by taking the hyssop and by declaring him cleansed from all sin." (VanGemeren)

ii. David didn't think for a moment that he could cleanse himself. He needed God to cleanse him, and to do it through the blood of the perfect sacrifice anticipated by animal sacrifices.

iii. **Purge:** "It is based on the word for sin (*chattath*) and literally means 'de-sin' me. David wanted to have his sin completely purged away." (Boice)

b. **Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow:** David knew that God's cleansing was *effective*. His sin was a deep stain but purity could be restored. We sense that David spoke with the voice of faith; it can be difficult for the convicted sinner to believe in such complete cleansing. It takes faith to believe God despite the doubt and difficulty.

i. "God could make him as if he had never sinned at all. Such is the power of the cleansing work of God upon the heart that he can restore innocence to us, and make us as if we had never been stained with transgression at all." (Spurgeon)

c. **Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice:** David felt the *brokenness* fitting for the sinner under the conviction of the Holy Spirit; it was so severe he felt as if his **bones** were broken. Confident that this was the work of the Holy Spirit, David could pray that it would lead to **joy and gladness**, that out of his brokenness David would **rejoice**.

i. It is a terrible thing to be so directly confronted with the blackness of our sin, yet God means even this to be a prelude to **joy and gladness**. The restoration of **joy** is His goal.

ii. "He is requesting a great thing; he seeks joy for a sinful heart, music for crushed bones. Preposterous prayer anywhere but at the throne of God!" (Spurgeon)

d. **Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities:** Repeatedly, David asked for forgiveness and

restoration. In the repetition we see that this was not a light thing for David. It was not easily expressed or easily received by faith. There was a sense in which he had to contend both with God and himself to bring him to the place he should be.

2. (10-11) *Restoration of heart.*

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.**

a. **Create in me a clean heart, O God:** David felt that it wasn't enough if God simply cleaned up the heart he had. The plea **create** indicated he needed a *new heart* from God, a **clean heart**. In this David anticipated one of the great promises to all who believe under the New Covenant: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh* (Eze 36:26).

i. "The word that begins this section is the Hebrew verb *bara*, which is used in Genesis 1 for the creation of the heavens and the earth by God. Strictly used, this word describes what only God can do: create *ex nihilo*, out of nothing." (Boice)

ii. "With the word *Create* he asks for nothing less than a miracle. It is a term for what God alone can do." (Kidner)

b. **And renew a steadfast spirit within me:** Along with a new and clean heart, David needed a **steadfast spirit** to continue in the way of godliness. This expressed a humble reliance upon the LORD.

i. **Renew a steadfast spirit:** "Or, a firm spirit, firm for God, able to resist the devil, steadfast in the faith,

and to abide constant in the way that is called holy.” (Trapp)

ii. “‘A steadfast spirit’ is needful in order to keep a cleansed heart clean; and, on the other hand, when, by cleanness of heart, a man is freed from the perturbations of rebellious desires and the weakening influences of sin, his spirit will be steadfast.” (Maclaren)

c. **Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me:** This was a further way David expressed his ongoing reliance upon God. For him, the whole point of cleansing and restoration was to renew his relationship with God. David didn’t want a God who cleansed him yet remained distant.

i. **Do not cast me away from Your presence:** “Cain’s punishment, which possibly David might have here in mind, as being guilty of murder.” (Trapp)

ii. **Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me:** “The likely background to this fear of being a castaway was the example of Saul, from whom the Spirit of the Lord had departed (1Sa 16:14).” (Kidner)

iii. “The soul that is truly penitent, dreads nothing but the thought of being rejected from the ‘presence,’ and deserted by the ‘Spirit’ of God. This is the most deplorable and irremediable effect of sin; but it is one that in general, perhaps, is the least considered and regarded of all others.” (Horne)

iv. It has been noted that several of these requests don’t fit for the believer under the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34, Eze 36:25-27). In the New Covenant the believer already has a new heart and is promised the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. This point is technically true, yet doesn’t take away from the deep

sense of a need for restoration and return to the first things that may mark an erring child of God even under the New Covenant.

3. (12-13) Restoration to the joy of salvation.

**Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.**

a. **Restore to me the joy of Your salvation:** In his many months of unconfessed sin, David felt the misery of spiritual defeat. He wanted once again the **joy** appropriate to **salvation**, to those whom the LORD rescues.

b. **Uphold me by Your generous Spirit:** This expresses again David's confidence in God for his future. He did not dream of upholding himself. Such self-confidence is what typically leads even good men into sin.

c. **Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You:** In the dark days before this confession of sin, David was not able to **teach** those who were far from God and saw none **converted** to Him. We don't know if David never made the attempt because of a sense of guilt, or if he attempted and saw no blessing on his work. One way or another, getting this right with God was key to effectiveness in his spiritual work.

i. **Sinners shall be converted:** VanGemeren notes that David used the same word here translated **converted** that was previously translated **restore** (Psa 51:12). "The psalmist who prayed 'restore to me' also prays that he may be instrumental in

restoring sinners to the 'ways' of the Lord."
(VanGemeren)

4. (14-17) *Restoration of praise.*

**Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your
righteousness.**

**O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.
For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give
it;**

**You do not delight in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.**

a. **Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed:** David was deeply aware of his sin of murder against Uriah (2 Samuel 11). Though he makes no specific reference to his adultery in this psalm, he felt that he must make specific mention of this great sin. Such a request presented to **the God of my salvation** would surely be answered.

i. "The unhappy criminal entreats, in this verse, for the divine help and deliverance, as if he not only heard the voice of innocent blood crying from the ground, but as if he saw the murdered Uriah coming upon him for vengeance, like an armed man."
(Horne)

b. **And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness:** David knew that with his guilt dealt with before God, he would again be able to **sing aloud**; that **my mouth shall show forth Your praise**. We believe that the months of unconfessed sin were silent from a spirit of true praise.

c. **You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it:** David expressed the principle brought forth in the previous psalm (Psalms 50). He understood that though animal sacrifice had its place, what God really desired was in the heart of man.

i. **Or else I would give it:** "He would have been glad enough to present tens of thousands of victims if these would have met the case. Indeed, anything which the Lord prescribed he would cheerfully have rendered." (Spurgeon)

d. **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart:** David had a great love for the House of the LORD and had sponsored great sacrifices unto God (2Sa 6:13; 2Sa 6:17-18). Yet he understood that one could sacrifice an animal or many animals to God without a **broken and contrite heart**. Perhaps David had offered many sacrifices at God's altar in his months of unconfessed sin. He recognized the emptiness of all that, and the value of his present **broken spirit** and **broken and contrite heart**.

i. **A broken spirit:** "If you and I have a broken spirit, all idea of our own importance is gone. What is the use of a broken heart? Why, much the same as the use of a broken pot, or a broken jug, or a broken bottle!" (Spurgeon)

ii. **A broken and contrite heart:** "This is opposed to that *hard* or *stony heart*, of which we read so oft, which signifies a heart insensible of the burden of sin, stubborn and rebellious against God, imminent and incorrigible." (Poole)

iii. "The clean heart must continue contrite, if it is not to cease to be clean." (Maclaren)

e. **These, O God, You will not despise:** It's easy to imagine that many in David's day would despise his **broken and contrite heart**. What he did – taking whatever woman he wanted and killing anyone who got in his way – these were expected conduct for the kings of the world. Perhaps his neighboring kings were mystified as to why any of this bothered David. To him, it did not matter what others thought; God did **not despise** his **broken and contrite heart**, and that was enough.

i. **You will not despise:** "This is great comfort to those that droop under a sense of sin and fear of wrath, being at next door to despair." (Trapp)

5. (18-19) *Restoration of good to the kingdom.*

Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;

Build the walls of Jerusalem.

Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,

With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;

Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

a. **Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem:** David realized that in his sin he did not only fail as a man, a husband, and a father. He also failed as a king over God's people. He humbly asked God to restore His favor to the kingdom.

i. We don't know if there was an obvious demonstration of God's displeasure against the kingdom of Israel in the period of David's unconfessed sin. Whether there was or was not, David understood that there was an aspect of restoration in terms of the kingdom that needed to be addressed.

b. **Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness:** Under the Old Covenant, David knew

that God was not yet done with animal sacrifices. They would still **offer bulls on Your altar**. With the heart issues addressed, those sacrifices could be full of meaning and benefit.

i. It's also possible that David had in mind the sacrifices that were regularly offered on behalf of Israel, and that they could be restored to meaning and benefit on behalf of the nation.

The Steadfast Love of God Endures

Psa 52:1 Why do you boast, great one, of your evil? God's faithfulness is eternal.

Psa 52:2 You make plans to ruin others; your tongue is like a sharp razor. You are always inventing lies.

Psa 52:3 You love evil more than good and falsehood more than truth.

Psa 52:4 You love to hurt people with your words, you liar!

Psa 52:5 So God will ruin you forever; he will take hold of you and snatch you from your home; he will remove you from the world of the living.

Psa 52:6 Righteous people will see this and be afraid; then they will laugh at you and say,

Psa 52:7 "Look, here is someone who did not depend on God for safety, but trusted instead in great wealth and looked for security in being wicked."

Psa 52:8 But I am like an olive tree growing in the house of God; I trust in his constant love forever and ever.

Psa 52:9 I will always thank you, God, for what you have done; in the presence of your people I will proclaim that you are good.

Psalms 52:1-9

Psalms 52 – Praying About the Man Who Loved Evil

This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul, and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech."** *The terrible events that prompted this chapter are recorded in 1 Samuel 21, 22. Doeg informed Saul regarding David's presence at the tabernacle of God and regarding the help he received from the priest there. In an evil and paranoid response, Saul had Doeg kill the priests and others at the tabernacle (1Sa 22:18-19).*

*Though the condemnation of Doeg in this psalm is strong, we sense it should be stronger in light of the mass-murder he committed. Yet this is David's **Contemplation** upon the incident, a careful examination of the root and end of Doeg's evil.*

A. The sin and its punishment.

1. (1-4) The man who loved evil and lying.

**Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?
The goodness of God endures continually.
Your tongue devises destruction,
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
You love evil more than good,
Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah
You love all devouring words,
You deceitful tongue.**

a. **Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man:** David thought of Doeg the Edomite and the evil report he brought to King Saul. He thought not only of the report itself, but also in the **boast** and joy Doeg took in delivering the message.

i. **Boast:** Sometimes boasting is a cover for deep insecurity. That wasn't the case with Doeg. He really thought quite highly of himself. "The thought conveyed in this Hebrew word is not necessarily that

of a person strutting around making extravagant claims to others about his or her abilities. Rather it is that of a smug self-sufficiency that does not parade itself openly simply because it is so convinced of its superiority.” (Boice)

ii. Doeg murdered 85 priests who were not trained for battle – hardly the work of a true **mighty man**. Like several other commentators, Poole thought this was used in an ironic sense: “*O mighty man!* he speaks ironically. O valiant captain! O glorious action! to kill a few weak and unarmed persons in the king’s presence, and under the protection of his guards! Surely thy name will be famous to all ages for such heroical courage.” (Poole)

iii. “A mighty man indeed to kill men who never touched a sword! He ought to have been ashamed of his cowardice.” (Spurgeon)

iv. “Miles Coverdale rendered this phrase, ‘O mighty man,’ as ‘Thou Tyrant,’ and thus gave an accurate interpretation of the kind of man this Edomite, Doeg, really was.” (Morgan)

b. **The goodness of God endures continually:** David earnestly believed that Doeg’s way would fail. God’s **goodness** would outlast his evil. It’s true that Doeg was a **mighty man**, but that was nothing compared to **God** and His never-ending **goodness**.

i. When David wrote **the goodness of God**, he used the word *El* to refer to deity instead of the more common *Elohim*. Some commentators believe the use of *El* emphasizes the strength and might of God. “Not without emphasis does he say the goodness of *the strong God*, a contrast to Doeg the *hero*, and the ruinous foundation of his fortune.” (Venema, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Your tongue devises destruction:** Since this psalm concerns the evil report of Doeg, David mentions the **destruction** that came from what Doeg said. There was an evil heart, mind, and life directing that **tongue** to work **like a sharp razor, working deceitfully** but it was all evident by what Doeg *said*.

i. The **destruction** brought by Doeg's evil report was real and terrible. 1Sa 22:18-19 tells us that he murdered 85 priests, and others in the city of Nob.

ii. "The prominence given to sins of speech is peculiar. We should have expected high-handed violence rather than these. But the psalmist is tracking the deeds to their source." (Maclaren)

iii. "*Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully*; wherewith a man pretending only to shave off the hair, doth suddenly and unexpectedly cut the throat." (Poole)

iv. "One is reminded of James' description of the tongue and its fearful power, as the psalmist describes the mischief of evil speech, growing out of an evil nature." (Morgan)

d. **You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking righteousness:** David here addressed Doeg's wicked heart and mind. The destruction of these razor-sharp words were not an accident or out of character. Some people love evil, and some people love to lie. Doeg fulfilled both aspects. He loved the destruction his **devouring words** brought.

i. "Thy heart is naught, and thence it is that thy tongue is so mischievous, as stinking breath cometh from corrupt inwards." (Trapp)

ii. There is reason to believe there was a gap in time between David visiting the tabernacle at Nob and Doeg's report to King Saul. "It was not a case of the

Edomite's merely blurting out what he knew at the first opportunity. On the contrary, he knew he had a piece of valuable information and kept it to himself until it would best serve his interests to divulge it." (Boice)

iii. David had done some wrong at the tabernacle of God at the city of Nob; he did lie to the priest Ahimelech. David did own up to his aspect of the responsibility in the matter (1Sa 22:22). Yet in this psalm he wisely and properly did not blame himself for the massacre of the priests there. This was the work of a man who loved **evil**. *There remain such men in the world.*

2. (5) *The response from heaven.*

**God shall likewise destroy you forever;
He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place,
And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah**

a. **God shall likewise destroy you forever:** Because *the goodness of God endures continually* (Psa 52:1), Doeg and his kind would be destroyed **forever**. He will not always allow this kind of destructive lie to rule the day.

i. "Instead of the assertive, the optative reading is preferable: 'Truly, may God bring you down.... May he snatch you.... May he uproot you....' The verbs are jussives, expressive of a desire." (VanGemeren)

ii. For emphasis and for the sake of good poetry, David used four vivid images of judgment against wicked men like Doeg.

- The wicked will be demolished (**destroy you**).
- The wicked will be snatched up like a coal from a fire (**take you away**).

- The wicked will have their abode taken away (**pluck you out of your dwelling place**).

- The wicked will be uprooted like a tree (**uproot you**).

iii. **He shall take you away:** "He is laid hold of, as a coal in the fire, with tongs (for so the word means), and dragged, as in that iron grip, out of the midst of his dwelling." (Maclaren)

iv. "As thou hast destroyed the Lord's priests, and their whole city, razing and harassing it; so God will demolish and destroy thee utterly as a house pulled down to the ground, so that one stone is not left upon another." (Trapp)

b. **He shall take you away:** David prophesied the judgment of God against Doeg. Not only would he be cast out of his house (**your dwelling place**) but also from **the land of the living**. Doeg was destined for death.

i. **Uproot you:** "The bad fruit which it has borne shall bring God's curse upon the tree; it shall not merely wither, or die, but it shall be plucked up from the roots, intimating that such a sinner shall die a violent death." (Clarke)

ii. "*Out of the land of the living*; out of this world, as the phrase is taken, Isa 53:8, Eze 32:32, and elsewhere; which was very terrible to him, who had all his portion in this world." (Poole)

B. The reaction of the righteous.

1. (6-7) *The general response.*

**The righteous also shall see and fear,
And shall laugh at him, saying,**

"Here is the man *who* did not make God his strength,

**But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness."**

a. **The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him:** When the coming judgment against Doeg happens, the people of God will notice it and it will cause them to honor and reverence God. It will also make them **laugh** in satisfaction at the destruction of such an evil man.

i. It is **the righteous** who learn from Doeg's judgment. We might have wished it were the wicked. "But this is the tragedy of life, that its teachings are prized most by those who have already learned them, and that those who need them most consider them least." (Maclaren)

ii. "*Fear*; both reverence God's just judgment upon thee, and be afraid of provoking God to send like judgment upon them." (Poole)

iii. **Shall laugh at him:** "If not with righteous joy, yet with solemn contempt.... This is a goodly theme for that deep-seated laughter which is more akin to solemnity than merriment." (Spurgeon)

iv. **Shall laugh at him:** "It is easy for those who have never lived under grinding, godless tyranny to reprobate the exultation of the oppressed at the sweeping away of their oppressors; but if the critics had seen their brethren set up as torches to light Nero's gardens, perhaps they would have known some thrill of righteous joy when they heard that he was dead." (Maclaren)

b. **Here is the man who did not make God his strength:** Previously David told us about Doeg's sins of destructive and deceitful words and of loving evil and

lying. Here he exposed an associated sin – a failure to trust God and the trust of great **riches** instead.

i. We often are drawn to evil and lying because we fail to trust that God can and will work through goodness and truth. We lie to ourselves, saying that we *must* cut these corners, work this evil, or promote this lie because it's the only way to get things done.

ii. In writing **trusted in the abundance of his riches**, David may point to something only implied in the 1 Samuel 21-22 account: that Doeg did this for the sake of **riches**, either immediate or eventual. For the sake of money he murdered more than 85 people. 1 Samuel 22 indicates that Doeg did this to gain the favor of Saul, and the favor of a king could be a path to significant **riches**.

iii. **Trusted in the abundance of his riches**: "Oh! 'tis hard to abound in riches and not to trust in them. Hence that caution (

Psa 62:10): *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*" (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "Wealth and wickedness are dreadful companions; when combined they make a monster. When the devil is master of money bags, he is a devil indeed." (Spurgeon)

2. (8-9) *David's response.*

**But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
I will praise You forever,
Because You have done *it*;
And in the presence of Your saints
I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good.**

a. **I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God:** David's run-in with Doeg

happened at the tabernacle (1Sa 21:1-7). Perhaps there he saw a healthy **green olive tree** that was even more blessed because of where it was planted (**in the house of God**). This blessedness came to David because he could honestly say, **I trust in the mercy of God** and he would continue to do so **forever and ever**.

i. "The *olive* is one of the longest-living trees; here the point is doubly reinforced, for he pictures an olive 'in full sap' and one that grows in a sacred courtyard." (Kidner)

ii. Psa 92:13 may indicate that there were trees at or near the house of God. This may have been particularly true for some of the places where the tabernacle was set up.

iii. "He was in the house of God, they were in the world; he was as a fruitful olive-tree, they were as barren, unprofitable wood; he was to be daily more and more strengthened, established, settled, and increased; they were to be cast down, broken, swept away, and extirpated; and all this because he had trusted in the mercy of God, they in the abundance of their riches." (Horne)

b. I will praise You forever, because You have done it: Doeg's evil had not yet gone away but David could praise God in the confidence of faith that can say, **You have done it**. The evil of man had not made him lose confidence in God and in the truth that God's **name** is **good** – His character and entire being.

i. **I will wait on Your name:** "Men must not too much fluster us; our strength is to sit still. Let the mighty ones boast, we will wait on the Lord; and if their haste brings them present honour, our patience will have its turn by-and-by, and bring us the honour which excelleth." (Spurgeon)

There Is None Who Does Good

Psa 53:1 Fools say to themselves, "There is no God." They are all corrupt, and they have done terrible things; there is no one who does what is right.

Psa 53:2 God looks down from heaven at people to see if there are any who are wise, any who worship him.

Psa 53:3 But they have all turned away; they are all equally bad. Not one of them does what is right, not a single one.

Psa 53:4 "Don't they know?" God asks. "Are these evildoers ignorant? They live by robbing my people, and they never pray to me."

Psa 53:5 But then they will become terrified, as they have never been before, for God will scatter the bones of the enemies of his people. God has rejected them, and so Israel will totally defeat them.

Psa 53:6 How I pray that victory will come to Israel from Zion. How happy the people of Israel will be when God makes them prosperous again!

Psalms 53:1-6

Psalms 53 – The Faithful God Delivers His People from Fools

*This psalm has the title **To the Chief Musician. Set to "Mahalath."** A Contemplation of David. The title describes for us the author, audience, and tune or instrument of the song (Psalms 88 is the one other psalm set to "**Mahalath**"). This psalm is essentially a repetition of Psalms 14, with a few small modifications, probably intended to give faith and courage to Israel in the midst of a national challenge, such as the threat of invasion or a siege.*

A. The sad condition of the man who rejects God.

1. (1) David's analysis of the God-rejecting man.

**The fool has said in his heart,
“ *There is no God.*”**

**They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity,
*There is none who does good.***

a. The fool has said in his heart, “*There is no God*”:

David looked at those who denied the existence of God and came to the conclusion that they are *fools*. The idea behind this ancient Hebrew word translated **fool** is more *moral* than *intellectual*. David did not have in mind those not smart enough to figure God out (no one is that smart); he had in mind those who simply reject God.

i. From the italics in the New King James Version, we can see that what the fool actually says is, “**No God.**” “That is, ‘No God for me.’ So his is a practical as well as theoretical atheism. Not only does he not believe in God, he also acts on his conviction.” (Boice)

ii. David says this because of the plain evidence that there is a God, evidence in both *creation* and *human conscience* that Paul described in Romans 1. The fact that some men insist on denying the existence of God does not erase God from the universe; it instead speaks to their own standing as *fools*. As Paul wrote in Rom 1:22, *Professing to be wise, they became fools.*

iii. “The Hebrew word for *fool* in this psalm is *nabal*, a word which implies an aggressive perversity, epitomized in the Nabal of 1Sa 25:25.” (Kidner)

iv. The God-denying man is a **fool** because:

- He denies what is plainly evident.
- He believes in tremendous effect with no cause.
- He denies a moral authority in the universe.

- He believes only what can be proven by the scientific method.
- He takes a dramatic, losing chance on his supposition that there is no God.
- He refuses to be persuaded by the many powerful arguments for the existence of God.

v. There are many powerful arguments for the existence of God; among them are these:

- *The Cosmological Argument*: The existence of the universe means there must be a creator God.
- *The Teleological Argument*: The existence of design in the universe means there must be a designer God.
- *The Anthropological Argument*: The unique nature and character of humanity means there must be a relational God.
- *The Moral Argument*: The existence of morality means there must be a governing God.

vi. "Which is cause, and which is effect? Does atheism result from folly, or folly from atheism? It would be perfectly correct to say that each is cause and each is effect." (Morgan)

b. **The fool has said in his heart**: David not only found *what* the fool said to be significant; *where* he said it is also important (**in his heart**). The God-denying man David has in mind is not merely troubled by intellectual objections to the existence of God; **in his heart** he wishes God away, typically for fundamentally moral reasons.

i. Joh 3:20 explains it this way: *For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

ii. This means that the man David had in mind is not an atheist for primarily intellectual reasons. "Honest intellectual agnosticism does not necessarily produce immorality; dishonest emotional atheism always does." (Morgan)

iii. It means that when we speak with those who deny God, we should not only – or even primarily – speak to their head, but also to their **heart**. "Let the preacher aim at the heart, and preach the all-conquering love of Jesus, and he will by God's grace win more doubters to the faith of the gospel than any hundred of the best reasoners who only direct their arguments to the head." (Spurgeon)

iv. The phrasing of **said in his heart** also reminds us that it is possible for one to *say in his mind* that there is a God, yet deny it in his **heart** and life. One may believe in God in theory, yet be a *practical atheist* in the way he lives.

v. 1Sa 27:1 tells us what David **said in his heart** on one occasion: *Now I shall perish someday by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand.* Was this not David, in some sense, also denying God and speaking as a **fool**?

vi. "It is in his heart he says this; this is the secret desire of every unconverted bosom. If the breast of God were within the reach of men, it would be stabbed a million times in one moment. When God was manifest in the flesh, he was altogether lovely; he did no sin; he went about continually doing good; and yet they took him and hung him on a tree; they mocked him and spat upon him. And this is the way

men would do with God again.” (Macheyne, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity:** David here considers the *result* of denying God. It leads men into *corruption* and **abominable iniquity**. This isn't to say that every atheist lives a dissolute life and every God-believer lives a good life; yet there is a marked difference in moral behavior between those who take God seriously and those who do not.

d. **There is none who does good:** As David considered the sin of the God-denier, he looked out over the landscape of humanity and concluded that **there is none who does good**. He did not mean that there is no human good in this world, but that fallen man is so fallen that he does not by instinct do **good**, and even the **good** he may do is tinged with evil.

- We are born with both the will and the capacity to do evil; no one has to teach a child to do bad.
- The path of least resistance usually leads us to bad, not good.
- It is often easier to encourage others to do bad, instead of good.
- Many of our good deeds are tinged with selfish, bad motives.

i. “This is no exaggeration, since every sin implies the effrontery of supposedly knowing better than God, and the corruption of loving evil more than good.” (Kidner)

ii. “There is too much dainty dealing nowadays with atheism; it is not a harmless error, it is an offensive, putrid sin, and righteous men should look upon it in that light.” (Spurgeon)

2. (2-3) *Heaven's analysis of fallen humanity.*

God looks down from heaven upon the children of men,

To see if there are *any* who understand, who seek God.

Every one of them has turned aside,

They have together become corrupt;

There is none who does good,

No, not one.

a. **God looks down from heaven upon the children of men:** While man may wish to forget about God, God never forgets about man. He is always observing man, looking **down from heaven upon the children of men.**

i. In man's rejection of God, there is often the wish that God would *just leave us alone*. This is an unwise wish, because all human life depends upon God (Act 17:28; Mat 5:45). This is an *impossible* wish, because God has rights of a Creator over His creation.

ii. "The words remind us of God descending from heaven to observe the folly of those building the tower of Babel (Gen 11:5) or looking down upon the wickedness of the race prior to his judgment by the flood." (Kidner)

iii. One of the differences between this psalm and Psalms 14 is that the word *Elohim* replaces *Yahweh* repeatedly; it is difficult to discern the exact reason why.

iv. Both the similarities and the differences of the two psalms are instructive. "Some slight alterations show how a great song may be adapted to meet the need of some special application of its truth." (Morgan)

b. **To see if there are any who understand, who seek God:** When God does look down from heaven, one thing He looks for is if there is any *understanding* or *seeking* among humanity.

i. God looks for this not primarily as an *intellectual* judgment; He doesn't wonder if there are any smart enough to figure Him out. He looks for this more as a *moral* and *spiritual* judgment; He looks for men who **understand** His heart and plan, and who **seek** Him for righteousness sake.

ii. If someone does actually **seek God**, it is evidence that God is doing a work in that person. One may be religious and conduct rituals yet not really seek God at all. Men often seek an idol of their own making, not the true God who lives and reigns in heaven.

iii. "You have gone through this form of worship, but you have not sought after God. I am sick of this empty religiousness. We see it everywhere; it is not communion with God, it is not getting to God; indeed, God is not in it at all." (Spurgeon, from a sermon on Romans 3)

c. **Every one of them has turned aside, they have together become corrupt:** When God looks, this is what He finds. He finds that man has **turned** away from God, and has therefore **become corrupt**.

i. Poole on **turned aside**: "Or, *are grown sour*, as this word signifies.... And so this is a metaphor from corrupted drinks, as the next [**become corrupt**] is taken from rotten meat."

ii. "The Hebrews have the same word for sin and a dead carcase; and again the same word for sin and stench." (Trapp)

d. **There is none who does good, no, not one:** When God finds **none who does good**, it is because there *are* none. It isn't as if there were some and God couldn't see them. David here observes and remembers that man is truly, profoundly, deeply *fallen*.

i. David's use of "**there is none who does good**" suddenly broadens the scope beyond the atheist to include *us*. "'After all, we are not atheists!' we might say. But now, as we are let in on God's perspective, we see that we are too included. In other words, the outspoken atheist of verse 1 is only one example of mankind in general." (Kidner)

ii. "What a picture of our race is this! Save only where grace reigns, there is none that doeth good; humanity, fallen and debased, is a desert without an oasis, a night without a star, a dunghill without a jewel, a hell without a bottom." (Spurgeon)

B. God's defense of His righteous people.

1. (4-5) *God defends His people when attacked.*

**Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge,
Who eat up my people as they eat bread,
And do not call upon God?**

There they are in great fear

Where no fear was,

**For God has scattered the bones of him who encamps
against you;**

You have put *them* to shame,

Because God has despised them.

a. **Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge:**

David first considered the profound fallenness of man; now he deals with the fate of God's people in such a fallen world. God's people might seem like the weak

fools, but David understood that it is **the workers of iniquity** who have **no knowledge**.

i. "The question has almost a tone of surprise, as if even Omniscience found a matter of wonder in men's mysterious love of evil." (Maclaren)

b. **Who eat up my people as they eat bread:** It *looks* like the **workers of iniquity** are strong and have the upper hand. David wondered if the people of God are abandoned to the fools and the corrupt of this world, to those who **do not call upon God**.

i. "*As they eat bread*, i.e. with as little regret or remorse, and with as much greediness, and delight, and constancy too, as they use to eat their meat." (Poole)

ii. **And do not call upon God:** "Practical atheism is, of course, prayerless." (Maclaren)

c. **There they are in great fear where no fear was:** Here this psalm briefly but significantly departs from the words of Psalms 14. The idea seems to be that David took Psalms 14, slightly modified it to meet the present crisis, and used it to encourage Israel.

i. It seems that it was during a time of attack or siege from an enemy (**him who encamps against you**). David trusted that God would put the enemy **in great fear**, even though their strategic position gave them no real reason to fear (**where no fear was**).

ii. David prayed for something that God had promised an obedient Israel. God promised to send such fear (Lev 26:36).

iii. David prayed for something that God had done on other occasions. There were many times when God sent fear into the hearts of Israel's enemies. Examples include Joshua against the Canaanites

(Jos 10:10), Gideon against the Midianites (Judges 7), Jonathan and his armor-bearer against the Philistines (1 Samuel 14), and Hezekiah against the Assyrians (2 Kings 18-19).

iv. "God they feared not, of men they were greatly feared, and yet here they feared a fear where no fear was." (Trapp)

v. "The fear of God is either an impelling motive, leading in the ways of life; or it becomes a compelling terror, issuing in destruction." (Morgan)

d. **You have put them to shame, because God has despised them:** Here God answers the fool who despises Him with despising the fool in return. However, it seems that it was not only the fool's denial of God that provoked the Almighty; it was more pointedly the fool's attack against the people of God. We might say that *attacking the people of God is just as foolish as denying God's existence.*

2. (6) *Longing for God's salvation.*

Oh, that the salvation of Israel *would come out of Zion!*

**When God brings back the captivity of His people,
Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.**

a. **Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion:** David *knew* that God was a refuge for His people and that the workers of iniquity would never win. Yet that was hard to see at the present time, so David expressed his great longing that God would bring the victory and deliverance He had promised to His people.

b. **When God brings back the captivity of His people:** This was not the Babylonian captivity, many generations after David's time. Here **captivity** is used in

a general sense, speaking of any time or situation where God's people are oppressed and bound.

i. "We take that phrase 'turns the captivity' in the sense in which it admittedly bears in Job 42:10 and Eze 16:53, namely that of deliverance from misfortune." (Maclaren)

c. **Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad:** David anticipated the coming deliverance, and called the people of God to be joyful in consideration of it.

The Lord Upholds My Life

Psa 54:1 Save me by your power, O God; set me free by your might!

Psa 54:2 Hear my prayer, O God; listen to my words!

Psa 54:3 Proud people are coming to attack me; cruel people are trying to kill me—those who do not care about God.

Psa 54:4 But God is my helper. The Lord is my defender.

Psa 54:5 May God use their own evil to punish my enemies. He will destroy them because he is faithful.

Psa 54:6 I will gladly offer you a sacrifice, O LORD; I will give you thanks because you are good.

Psa 54:7 You have rescued me from all my troubles, and I have seen my enemies defeated.

Psalms 54:1-7

Psalms 54 – Help When Abandoned and Betrayed

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Contemplation of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, "Is David not hiding with us?"** There were actually two times when the Ziphites betrayed David unto King Saul, first in 1 Samuel 23 and the second in 1 Samuel 26. David escaped both times, but the*

circumstances of this psalm seem to best fit the circumstances of 1 Samuel 23, when David learned of the Ziphite betrayal but before the deliverance of God was displayed (1Sa 23:26-29).

*This is one of the few psalms with a specific musical direction: **With stringed instruments**. It is also called **A Contemplation**. The Hebrew word for **Contemplation** (maskil) might be better understood as instruction (James Montgomery Boice).*

A. David's danger.

1. (1-2) Looking to the name and strength of God.

**Save me, O God, by Your name,
And vindicate me by Your strength.
Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.**

a. **Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength:** In his distress, David relied on both the **name** and the **strength** of God. **Name** speaks of the nature and character of God; **strength** speaks of His great power. David knew that God's **strength** could respond to his need by what he knew of God's **name**.

i. **By Your name:** "Nothing less than the whole fulness of the manifested God is enough for the necessities of one poor man." (Maclaren)

ii. David's rescue would be his vindication. His enemies would have greater evidence that David was in the right and they were in the wrong when God answered this prayer and preserved this man after His heart.

iii. God gave David a remarkable vindication after each time the Ziphites betrayed David. Shortly after both times the Ziphites betrayed David, he had the opportunity to kill King Saul. Both times he spared

Saul's life (1 Samuel 24, 26), and both times Saul admitted his great wrong.

b. **Hear my prayer, O God:** It was common for David and others in their prayers to merely ask for God to **hear** or **give ear** to their cry. It was assumed that if the good and merciful God heard, He would act.

2. (3) *The description of the need.*

**For strangers have risen up against me,
And oppressors have sought after my life;
They have not set God before them. Selah**

a. **For strangers have risen up against me:** David's troubles came from the Ziphites, as noted in the title of this psalm and in 1Sa 23:14-24. The Ziphites were Israelis; they were even of the same tribe as David (Judah). Yet their betrayal of David was so contrary to both David and God's cause that David could rightly refer to them as **strangers**, as **oppressors** who **sought** David's **life**.

i. "The Ziphites, though David's countrymen, acted the part of 'strangers' or 'aliens,' in seeking to deliver him up to his unjust and cruel enemy." (Horne)

ii. Today some who are outwardly counted among the people of God will act as **strangers** as they betray the Son of David to gain the favor of those allied with the king of this world, the Prince of the Power of the Air.

b. **They have not set God before them:** Their problems were not only in relation to David, but also in relation to God. Their rejection of David was just another way that they rejected God. We don't know if David specifically had Saul in mind, but it certainly fit the jealous king.

i. "David felt that atheism lay at the bottom of the enmity which pursued him. Good men are hated for God's sake, and this is a good plea for them to urge in prayer." (Spurgeon)

ii. "This was a bad period for David. It was a time when seemingly he had nowhere to turn. He was unsafe even in the wilderness, and there was hardly anyone he could trust." (Boice)

B. Proclamation and prayer.

1. (4-5a) The proclamation.

Behold, God *is* my helper;

The Lord *is* with those who uphold my life.

He will repay my enemies for their evil.

a. **Behold, God is my helper:** Though a hunted man, David could confidently expect God's help. His present adversity had not led him to question the goodness of God, but to appeal to it.

i. "David was bringing himself and then his enemies to God's attention; he now brings God before his own attention." (Kidner)

ii. Maclaren had in mind that David said, **Behold, God is my helper** to his *enemies*. "The suppliant rises from his knees, and points the enemies round him to his one Helper." (Maclaren)

iii. "Little care we for the defiance of the foe while we have the defence of God." (Spurgeon)

b. **The Lord is with those who uphold my life:** The sense of this remarkable statement is that *Adonai* is among those who help me by upholding my life.

i. "In 4b the ancient versions, followed by most modern ones, seem to have found the Hebrew text too startling, where it numbers God 'among' *the*

upholders of my life. But this is not belittling Him; it is seeing His hand behind the human help.” (Kidner)

ii. **He will repay my enemies for their evil:** “They worked for evil, and they shall have their wages.” (Spurgeon)

2. (5b-6) *The prayer.*

Cut them off in Your truth.

I will freely sacrifice to You;

I will praise Your name, O LORD, for *it is good.*

a. **Cut them off in Your truth:** David came to prayer again. He asked God to kill or cast out his enemies, and to do it **in Your truth**. David could pray such bold prayers against his enemies because he believed more than his self-interest was at risk; so was God’s **truth**.

i. **Cut them off:** “He desires that God would destroy them with a *death-dealing blow*, which is the force the word contains; its primitive sense is *to be silent, to keep silence*, whence it is transferred to a stroke penetrating deeply and striking fatally, such as is called a *silent* blow, opposed to a *sounding* one, which is wont to rebound and not pierce deeply.” (Venema, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. “Thou hast *promised* to save me; these have purposed to destroy me. Thy *truth* is engaged in my defence; they will destroy me if permitted to *live*; to save *thy truth*, and to accomplish its *promises*, *thou must cut them off.*” (Clarke)

iii. Some are uncomfortable with prayers that ask for the doom of enemies. It’s true that Jesus told us to pray in a more generous way for our enemies (Mat 5:43-44). Yet there is nothing wrong with the basic principle of wanting to see good triumph and for God to do His work against those who do evil.

iv. David lived out another aspect of this prayer. He prayed, **Cut them off in Your truth** but refused to take vengeance in his own hands. Immediately after the second betrayal of the Ziphites (1Sa 26:1) David had the opportunity to kill King Saul in his sleep and he refused to do it. David would not **cut** him **off**; he waited upon God to do it.

b. **I will freely sacrifice to You:** This described what is sometimes called a *freewill sacrifice* – one that is given to God without specific reference to a previous vow made. It was a **sacrifice** that didn't *need* to be made; it was done **freely** out of gratitude.

i. "*Freely sacrifice; not by constraint, as many do, because they are obliged to it, and cannot neglect it without shame and inconvenience to themselves; but with a willing and cheerful mind, which thou lovest in and above all sacrifices.*" (Poole)

c. **I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good:** David said this in anticipation of God's rescue, but not in a demand for the rescue. He was able to **praise** God while the problem remained and before the prayer was answered.

i. "Christians should follow his example: they should consider how great things God hath done for them, and should never suffer the voice of praise and thanksgiving to cease in the church of the redeemed." (Horne)

3. (7) *The confident conclusion.*

**For He has delivered me out of all trouble;
And my eye has seen *its desire* upon my enemies.**

a. **For He has delivered me out of all trouble:** David confidently brought his request to God, knowing that

many times before God had **delivered** him. God's past faithfulness became the ground for future faith.

i. "This is the language of faith; this is the triumph of trust." (Trapp)

ii. It is likely that David said this in faith, in *anticipation* of deliverance. When it came, it was remarkable. After the Ziphites betrayed David in 1Sa 23:19 Saul came very close to capturing him. When David was almost in Saul's grasp, the king learned of a Philistine invasion and had to break off his pursuit (1Sa 23:27-28).

iii. "David lived a life of dangers and hair-breadth 'scapes, yet was he always safe." (Spurgeon)

b. My eye has seen its desire upon my enemies:

David knew what it was like to defeat his enemies before (Goliath is one example); he trusted that he would know it again.

i. "As admiring God's justice on his enemies, and love towards his people, he was well pleased with such a providence, and beheld it with comfort." (Trapp)

ii. There is a sense in which David in this psalm prefigured his Great Son. Jesus was the anointed King yet to come into the fullness of His kingdom. He came to rescue and lead God's people, and when He did, some among God's people betrayed Him unto death. We can easily see these lines from the psalm in the mouth of Jesus, praying to His Father:

*Save Me, O God, by Your name,
Strangers have risen up against Me.
Behold, God is My helper;
He has delivered Me out of all trouble.*

Cast Your Burden on the Lord

Psa 55:1 Hear my prayer, O God; don't turn away from my plea!

Psa 55:2 Listen to me and answer me; I am worn out by my worries.

Psa 55:3 I am terrified by the threats of my enemies, crushed by the oppression of the wicked. They bring trouble on me; they are angry with me and hate me.

Psa 55:4 I am terrified, and the terrors of death crush me.

Psa 55:5 I am gripped by fear and trembling; I am overcome with horror.

Psa 55:6 I wish I had wings like a dove. I would fly away and find rest.

Psa 55:7 I would fly far away and make my home in the desert.

Psa 55:8 I would hurry and find myself a shelter from the raging wind and the storm.

Psa 55:9 Confuse the speech of my enemies, O Lord! I see violence and riots in the city,

Psa 55:10 surrounding it day and night, filling it with crime and trouble.

Psa 55:11 There is destruction everywhere; the streets are full of oppression and fraud.

Psa 55:12 If it were an enemy making fun of me, I could endure it; if it were an opponent boasting over me, I could hide myself from him.

Psa 55:13 But it is you, my companion, my colleague and close friend.

Psa 55:14 We had intimate talks with each other and worshiped together in the Temple.

Psa 55:15 May my enemies die before their time; may they go down alive into the world of the dead! Evil is in their homes and in their hearts.

Psa 55:16 But I call to the LORD God for help, and he will save me.

Psa 55:17 Morning, noon, and night my complaints and groans go up to him, and he will hear my voice.

Psa 55:18 He will bring me safely back from the battles that I fight against so many enemies.

Psa 55:19 God, who has ruled from eternity, will hear me and defeat them; for they refuse to change, and they do not fear him.

Psa 55:20 My former companion attacked his friends; he broke his promises.

Psa 55:21 His words were smoother than cream, but there was hatred in his heart; his words were as soothing as oil, but they cut like sharp swords.

Psa 55:22 Leave your troubles with the LORD, and he will defend you; he never lets honest people be defeated.

Psa 55:23 But you, O God, will bring those murderers and liars to their graves before half their life is over. As for me, I will trust in you.

Psalms 55:1-23

Psalms 55 – Trusting God Against a Treacherous Enemy

The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Contemplation of David.** *The psalm describes a time of some kind of rebellion or power struggle against David, and a key leader in the struggle was a trusted associate who betrayed David. The city is dangerous because of the rebellion, and David cries out to God. Most commentators fit this psalm to Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15-18) and the trusted associate as Ahithophel. Parts of this psalm seem to fit Absalom's rebellion, but some parts don't. It's hard to imagine David wishing Absalom to hell (Psa 55:15) when he didn't even*

want him to die. It may be that the events connected with this psalm are unrecorded in the sacred history of the life of David.

A. Fear: David describes his trouble.

1. (1-3) Misery in oppression.

**Give ear to my prayer, O God,
And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.
Attend to me, and hear me;
I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily,
Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the oppression of the wicked;
For they bring down trouble upon me,
And in wrath they hate me.**

a. **Do not hide Yourself from my supplication:** We sense in David's prayer that he felt God was distant, as if He were hiding from David. He asked God to **attend to me, and hear me**. David believed he could face almost anything with the strong sense of God's presence and pleasure.

i. "In that dread hour when Jesus bore our sins upon the tree, his Father did hide himself, and this was the most dreadful part of all the Son of David's agony." (Spurgeon)

b. **I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily:** At the beginning of this psalm, David had little peace. He was **restless**, complaining, and moaning; and his moans were noisy. He needed help from God.

i. "What a comfort that we may be thus familiar with our God! We may not complain *of* him, but we may complain *to* him." (Spurgeon)

c. **They bring down trouble upon me:** David was troubled by **the voice of the enemy** (this psalm seems to emphasize the singular instead of several enemies)

and **the oppression of the wicked**. They hated David and caused great **trouble** for him.

i. **They bring down trouble upon me:** "They tumble it on me, as men do stones or anything else upon their besiegers, to endamage them; so did these sin, shame, anything, upon innocent David, to make him odious." (Trapp)

2. (4-8) *Fighting fear.*

**My heart is severely pained within me,
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me,
And horror has overwhelmed me.
So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
Indeed, I would wander far off,
And remain in the wilderness. Selah
I would hasten my escape
From the windy storm and tempest."**

a. **My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me:** The stress of this crisis did cause David mental anguish, increased by the real danger of death. All this made David tremble in fear and feel that **horror has overwhelmed me**.

i. **Severely pained:** "His heart is palpitating like a woman in labor." (VanGemeren)

ii. **The terrors of death:** "I am in hourly expectation of being massacred." (Clarke)

iii. "He can do nothing but groan or moan. His heart 'writhes' in him. Like an avalanche, deadly terrors have fallen on him and crushed him. Fear and trembling have pierced into his inner being, and 'horror' (a rare word, which the LXX [Septuagint]

here renders darkness) wraps him round or covers him, as a cloak does." (Maclaren)

iv. Clarke noted what a natural and true description this is of the steps that lead to overwhelming horror. "How natural is this description! He is in *distress* – he *mourns* – *makes a noise* – *sobs* and *sighs* – his *heart is wounded* – he expects nothing but *death* – this produces *fear* – this produces *tremor*, which terminates in that *deep apprehension* of *approaching* and *inevitable ruin* that *overwhelms* him with *horror*. No man ever described a wounded heart like David." (Clarke)

b. **Oh, that I had wings like a dove:** David wished he could just escape this terror-filled situation and **remain in the wilderness**. It is likely that David wrote this under the stress and intrigues of power once he came to the throne. He longed for the simpler days when he repeatedly saw God's faithfulness **in the wilderness**.

i. "An old writer tells us it would have been more honourable for him to have asked for the strength of an ox to bear his trials, than for the wings of a dove to flee from them." (Jay, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **I would hasten my escape, from the windy storm and tempest:** If David had the wings of a bird he would simply **escape** from his present problems. Most people can identify with David's longing.

i. "*Like a dove*; which being fearful, and pursued by birds of prey, flies away, and that very swiftly and far, and into solitary places, where it hides and secures itself in the holes of the rocks, or in some other secret and safe place; all which fitly represents David's present disposition and desire." (Poole)

ii. "It is some comfort to us to know that there are spiritual giants who have had this urge, whether they have succumbed to it like Elijah (1Ki 19:3 ff.) or withstood it like Jeremiah (Jer 9:2; Jer 10:19)." (Kidner)

iii. David wanted to simply **escape** – but he did not. "So the psalmist's wish was but a wish; and he, like the rest of us, had to stand to his post, or be tied to his stake, and let enemies and storms do their worst." (Maclaren)

B. Fury: David asks God to deal with his enemies.

1. (9-11) Destroy them, O Lord.

**Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues,
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
Day and night they go around it on its walls;
Iniquity and trouble *are* also in the midst of it.
Destruction *is* in its midst;
Oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets.**

a. **Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues:** From the repeated reference to the speech of his enemies (verses 3, 9, 11, and 12), we sense this was some kind of whispering attack on David that was serious enough to endanger his life. Here he prayed that God would **divide** those who spoke evil against him.

i. Many see an allusion to the confusion of tongues at Babel (Gen 11:1-9). "His prayer is perceptive, and a lesson to us: he remembers how God dealt with Babel (55:9a), another arrogant city, by exploiting the inherent divisiveness of evil." (Kidner)

ii. If this psalm is connected to Absalom's rebellion and Ahithophel's treason, the answer to the prayer is recorded in 2Sa 17:1-23 when there was a division

of opinion among Abasalom's advisers Ahithophel and Hushai.

b. **I have seen violence and strife in the city:** The attacks against David may have begun with words but did not end with them. People walked the city **day and night** causing trouble for David. The crisis at hand was not merely a problem for David, but for God's people in general.

i. "The city, the holy city had become a den of wickedness: conspirators met in the dark and talked in little knots in the streets even in broad daylight." (Spurgeon)

c. **Destruction is in its midst; oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets:** The instability and intrigue made the whole city unsafe.

2. (12-14) *A reflection on the bitterness of a friend's betrayal.*

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me;

Then I could bear it.

Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me;

Then I could hide from him.

But it was you, a man my equal,

My companion and my acquaintance.

We took sweet counsel together,

And walked to the house of God in the throng.

a. **For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it:** David refers to a specific person who speaks against (**reproaches**) him. This was someone once aligned with David who nevertheless **exalted himself** against David.

i. "None are such real enemies as false friends." (Spurgeon)

b. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance: The unnamed man was a partner and friend to David. They helped each other with advice (**took sweet counsel together**) and went to the **house of God** together.

i. "The psalmist feels that the defection of his false friend is the worst blow of all. He could have braced himself to bear an enemy's reviling; he could have found weapons to repel, or a shelter in which to escape from, open foes; but the baseness which forgets all former sweet companionship in secret, and all association in public and in worship, is more than he can bear up against." (Maclaren)

ii. We don't know exactly when this happened in David's life – if it was before or after his sin with Bathsheba and cover-up murder of Uriah. Yet the connection of David's words here with his sin against Uriah is stunning. "What David was unwittingly describing in this moving passage was also the essence of his own treachery to Uriah, one of his staunchest friends (2Sa 23:39)." (Kidner)

3. (15) Asking God to take vengeance.

Let death seize them;

Let them go down alive into hell,

For wickedness *is* in their dwellings *and* among them.

a. Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell: This remarkably strong statement from David shows how dangerous the man was to the peace of God's people and how deeply he had wounded David. It was a strong prayer, but it was a prayer that left vengeance to God, and David refused to take vengeance himself.

i. "The phrase, *let them go down to Sheol alive*, is a clear echo of Num 16:30, where Moses had called for

proof that in resisting him the rebels of his day were resisting God.” (Kidner)

b. **For wickedness is in their dwellings and among them:** David called upon God to bring such a severe judgment because the **wickedness** was so deeply ingrained in them.

i. “It seems significant that David does not specifically mention his former friend in this malediction. In fact, he seems to have distinguished between his enemies, who are cursed here, and his former friend in the previous section, who is not cursed.” (Boice)

C. Faith: Finding rest in God.

1. (16-19) *Confidence in God despite the attacks of the enemy.*

**As for me, I will call upon God,
And the LORD shall save me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.
He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle
that was against me,
For there were many against me.
God will hear, and afflict them,
Even He who abides from of old. Selah
Because they do not change,
Therefore they do not fear God.**

a. **As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me:** David abruptly switched from praying for destruction to declaring calm confidence in God. It’s a further indication that he was able to leave his crisis – and his enemies – in the hands of the LORD, who would **save** him.

i. "The Psalmist would not endeavour to meet the plots of his adversaries by counterplots, nor imitate their incessant violence, but in direct opposition to their godless behaviour would continually resort to his God." (Spurgeon)

ii. "If I read the text aright, we here have David talking to himself; and what we are to endeavor to do is, *to talk to ourselves, just as David talked to himself.*" (Spurgeon)

b. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray:

David's confidence in God was rooted in sincere dependence on God, demonstrated by constant prayer. Together all this gave David the confidence in God to say, **He shall hear my voice.**

i. "The Hebrews began their day in the *evening*, and hence David mentions the *evening first.*" (Clarke)

c. He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: David felt that his **soul** had been rescued (bought out, **redeemed**) from turmoil and crisis and into **peace**. The battle continued (there were still **many against** him), but his soul was **in peace**.

d. God will hear, and afflict them, even He who abides from of old: David was confident that the eternal God would answer His prayer.

e. Because they do not change, therefore they do not fear God: The sense of **they do not change** is somewhat obscure. It likely refers either to the idea that they do not change for the better, or they have not had to change because of adversity.

i. "Their not having 'changes' is closely connected with their not fearing God. The word is elsewhere used for changes of raiment, or for the relief of military

guards. Calvin and others take the changes intended to be vicissitudes of fortune, and hence draw the true thought that unbroken prosperity tends to forgetfulness of God." (Maclaren)

ii. "Most of those who have few or no afflictions and trials in life, have but little religion. They become sufficient to themselves, and call not upon God." (Clarke)

2. (20-21) The treachery of David's enemy.

He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him;

He has broken his covenant.

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter,

But war was in his heart;

His words were softer than oil,

Yet they were drawn swords.

a. **He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; he has broken his covenant:** David's unnamed enemy was also treacherous, breaking peaceful relationships and breaking agreements with others.

b. **The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart:** Using repetition and vivid images, David showed how dishonorable his unnamed enemy was. In contrast we see how *honorable* David was in not specifically naming the man.

3. (22-23) Confidently leaving the matter in God's hands.

Cast your burden on the LORD,

And He shall sustain you;

He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction;

Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half

**their days;
But I will trust in You.**

a. Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you: There are few greater burdens to bear than a one-time friend who becomes a treacherous and dangerous enemy. David knew that even this was a **burden** that God could and should bear.

i. "God imposes burdens, to see what we will do with them. We may carry them to our undoing, or we may cast them on Him for his blessed countenance."
(Meyer)

ii. "The word *burden* is too restrictive: it means whatever is given you, your appointed lot (hence in New English Bible, 'your fortunes'). And the promise is not that God will carry it, but that he will sustain *you*." (Kidner)

iii. **He shall sustain:** "The experience of suffering was not taken away from the servant of God, but he was sustained, and so made strong enough to resist its pressure, and through it to make his service more perfect. This is how God ever sustains us in the bearing of burdens." (Morgan)

iv. "If I cast my burden upon the Lord, what business have I to carry it myself? How can I truthfully say that I have cast it upon him if still I am burdened with it?" (Spurgeon)

b. He shall never permit the righteous to be moved: David had hope and confidence because he was persuaded that his fate did not rest in the hands of treacherous men. God was still Lord over all, and God had the final word on whether the righteous would **be moved** or not.

i. Morgan noted the movement in this psalm from *fear* to *fury* and now finally to *faith*. "Fear leads only to desire to flee. Fury only emphasizes the consciousness of the wrong. Faith alone creates courage." (Morgan)

c. **You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction:** The faithful God would not only help and establish the righteous, He would also **bring down** those **bloodthirsty and deceitful men** who caused so much trouble among God's people.

d. **But I will trust in You:** The psalm appropriately ended with David's focus upon God, not his enemies. He would **trust** in Him and not be disappointed.

i. "The *I* is emphatic, dismissing the preoccupation with the enemy. In effect, there are two parties involved, not three. 'As for me, I will trust in the Lord.'" (Kidner)

In God I Trust

Psa 56:1 Be merciful to me, O God, because I am under attack; my enemies persecute me all the time.

Psa 56:2 All day long my opponents attack me. There are so many who fight against me.

Psa 56:3 When I am afraid, O LORD Almighty, I put my trust in you.

Psa 56:4 I trust in God and am not afraid; I praise him for what he has promised. What can a mere human being do to me?

Psa 56:5 My enemies make trouble for me all day long; they are always thinking up some way to hurt me!

Psa 56:6 They gather in hiding places and watch everything I do, hoping to kill me.

Psa 56:7 Punish them, O God, for their evil; defeat those people in your anger!

Psa 56:8 You know how troubled I am; you have kept a record of my tears. Aren't they listed in your book?

Psa 56:9 The day I call to you, my enemies will be turned back. I know this: God is on my side—

Psa 56:10 the LORD, whose promises I praise.

Psa 56:11 In him I trust, and I will not be afraid. What can a mere human being do to me?

Psa 56:12 O God, I will offer you what I have promised; I will give you my offering of thanksgiving,

Psa 56:13 because you have rescued me from death and kept me from defeat. And so I walk in the presence of God, in the light that shines on the living.

Psalms 56:1-13

Psalms 56 – Faith in the Midst of Fear

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Silent Dove in Distant Lands."** A Michtam of David when the Philistines captured him in Gath. It is probable (though not certain) that **The Silent Dove in Distant Lands** was the tune to which this psalm was sung; some connect it with the theme, thinking it represents a dove in trouble even as David was in trouble.*

*Like Psalms 16 and the next four psalms, Psalms 56 is called **A Michtam of David**. The title **Michtam** is best understood as golden, though others think it is related to a word meaning to cover, implying necessary secrecy in a time of crisis.*

*The time **when the Philistines captured him in Gath** is recorded in 1Sa 21:10-15. It deals with the period between the visit to the tabernacle at Nob and David's arrival at Adullam. David was alone, desperate, afraid – and not thinking too clearly.*

A. Fear and faith in response to constant danger.

1. (1-2) *Looking to the Most High for mercy.*

Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up;

Fighting all day he oppresses me.

My enemies would hound *me* all day,

For *there are* many who fight against me, O Most High.

a. **Be merciful to me, O God:** David was in great and constant danger from many enemies – both the Philistines and Saul’s servants. He cried out to God, knowing that divine help could rescue him from any man-made threat. He appealed to the *mercy* of God, not relying on what he may or may not deserve.

i. “Instead of building up gradually to his complaint, the psalmist pours out his heart immediately.” (VanGemeren)

ii. **Swallow me up:** “The open mouths of sinners when they rage against us should open our mouths in prayer.” (Spurgeon)

b. **There are many who fight against me, O Most High:** On earth David was greatly outnumbered, so he looked for help from the God who is enthroned above. David knew the strategic value of high ground in battle; it made sense for him to look for help from the **Most High**.

i. “To set forth the indignity of the thing, he repeateth the same sentence again in the plural number, noting that there were not a few of them bitterly bent by might and main to mischief him, a poor forlorn, friendless man.” (Trapp)

ii. Adam Clarke understood **O Most High** in a different way: “I do not think that this word expresses any attribute of God, or indeed is at all

addressed to him. It signifies, literally, *from on high*, or *from a high or elevated place*: 'For the multitudes fight against me from the high or elevated place.'" (Clarke)

2. (3-4) *Afraid and not afraid.*

**Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.
What can flesh do to me?**

a. **Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You:** The young man who killed the lion and the bear, who killed Goliath, and was a successful young captain in Israel's army, did not deny the presence of fear. There were times when he was **afraid**. Yet he knew what to do with that fear, to boldly proclaim His **trust in** God despite the fear.

i. "He feared, but that fear did not fill the whole area of his mind, for he adds, '*I will trust in thee.*' It is possible, then, for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment." (Spurgeon)

ii. Many do not serve God or speak a word in His name to others out of fear, and they wait for a time when they are no longer **afraid** to do so. David would counsel them, "I am sometimes **afraid** – but I **trust in** God and do what is right to do." Don't wait for the fear to stop before you do what is right before the Lord.

iii. "It is a sure sign of grace when a man can trust in his God, for the natural man, when afraid, falls back on some human trust, or he thinks that he will be able to laugh at the occasion of fear." (Spurgeon)

b. **I will praise His word:** In the midst of the declaration of his trust in God, David calls attention to the praiseworthiness of God's word. His trust in God was directly connected with God's word. His trust wasn't a blind hope or wish cast up to heaven; it was based on God's revealed *character* and revealed *promises*.

i. We say we trust God, but how do we confidently know anything about God? We know it through His Word, through His self-revelation to us.

ii. "It might also be the case, however, that David is thinking specifically of the words of God that were brought to him by the prophet Samuel, assuring him that he would be king over Israel (*cf.* 1Sa 16:1-13)."
(Boice)

c. **In God I have put my trust; I will not fear:** Trusting God has given David the momentum toward even greater faith. He began by trusting God even while **afraid**; with that trust rewarded, he can take a further step: **I will not fear**.

i. "First, the singer declares that in the hour of fear he will trust. Then he declares he will trust and not be afraid." (Morgan)

d. **What can flesh do to me:** Our instinctive reply to this rhetorical question is, *a lot of harm*. We constantly hear of and experience great harm that comes from mankind. Yet in the context of David's trust in the *Most High*, he realizes that with God for him, it doesn't matter what man or men may be against him.

3. (5-7) *The continuing danger.*

**All day they twist my words;
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
They gather together,
They hide, they mark my steps,**

**When they lie in wait for my life.
Shall they escape by iniquity?
In anger cast down the peoples, O God!**

a. **All day they twist my words:** The attacks against David were not only violent; they were also devious, with the twisting and distortion of his words and intentions. His many enemies constantly plotted against him **for evil**, hoping to **lie in wait** and kill David with a surprise attack.

i. "The unremitting pressure is the worst part of the ordeal. It was the first thing David emphasized: *all day long...all day long* (56:1,2); and now he tells of it again (56:5)." (Kidner)

ii. "The verb 'twist' is derived from a root that signifies a laborious, toilsome, unrewarding act. They plot so as to undo whatever the godly man has spoken and has planned to do right." (VanGemeren)

iii. **Twist my words:** "This is a common mode of warfare among the ungodly. They put our language on the rack; they extort meanings from it which it cannot be made fairly to contain." (Spurgeon)

b. **Shall they escape by iniquity:** David appealed to God's justice. It wasn't right for these wicked enemies to triumph over him. Whether they were the Philistines of Gath or Saul's servants, David asked God to **cast** them **down**.

B. God's sympathetic care for David.

1. (8-9) *God noticed David's misery.*

**You number my wanderings;
Put my tears into Your bottle;
Are they not in Your book?
When I cry out to You,**

**Then my enemies will turn back;
This I know, because God *is* for me.**

a. **You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle:** In this period of David's life, before coming to Adullam Cave (1 Samuel 22), he was completely alone. This made him value the sympathy and care of God all the more, and he found great comfort in the thought that God noted his misery.

i. "The reason for hope in God's justice lies in his divine nature and promise to vindicate his children. For this purpose the psalmist adds a personal note about the extent of his suffering." (VanGemeren)

ii. "*Put my tears into thy bottle; regard, and remember, and pity them.*" (Poole)

iii. "His sorrows were so many that there would need a great wine-skin to hold them all." (Spurgeon)

iv. **My tears into Your bottle:** "Here is an allusion to a very ancient custom, which we know long obtained among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, of putting the tears which were shed for the death of any person into small phials, called *lacrymatories* or *urnae lacrymales* and offering them on the tomb of the deceased. Some of these were of *glass*, some of *pottery*, and some of *agate*, *sardonyx*, etc. A small one in my own collection is of *hard baked clay*." (Clarke)

v. Spurgeon noted this practice and such ancient bottles, but believed that David made no allusion at all to this Roman practice.

b. **This I know, because God is for me:** This was the ground of David's confidence. His **wanderings** and **tears** did not mean that God was against him. Instead he knew

that God was **for** him, and would answer his prayer for rescue.

i. **God is for me:** "What can we possibly desire more, than this assurance, that, how many, or how formidable soever our enemies may be, yet there is one always ready to appear in our defence, whose power no creature is able to resist? 'This I know,' saith David; and had we the faith of David, we should know it too." (Horne)

ii. **God is for me:** "Paul was to echo the triumphant end of this verse (or Psa 118:7 a), and cap it with 'who is against us?' (Rom 8:31)." (Kidner)

2. (10-11) Confidence in God declared again.

**In God (I will praise *His* word),
In the LORD (I will praise *His* word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?**

a. **I will praise His word:** For the second and third times in this psalm, David declared the greatness of God's word. This was how he knew that God was **for** him. It wasn't just a wish, a dream, or a hope. It was well-grounded, because God said it in **His word**.

b. **In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me:** David repeated this phrase again, preaching confidence to himself. Because God was for him (confirmed by **His word**), David need not fear what man could do to him.

i. "When news came to Luther, that both emperor and pope had threatened his ruin, he bravely answered, I care for neither of them, I know whom I have trusted." (Trapp)

3. (12-13) Fulfilling the vow.

**Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God;
I will render praises to You,
For You have delivered my soul from death.
Have You not kept my feet from falling,
That I may walk before God
In the light of the living?**

a. **Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God;
I will render praises to You:** David referred to the sacrifice he would offer for the deliverance he knew God would bring. He was a long distance from God's altar so the sacrifice could not yet be made; but in David's heart it was already done, as was the anticipated rescue.

i. "So sure is he of deliverance, that, as often in similar psalms, his thoughts are busied in preparing his sacrifice of thanks before the actual advent of the mercy for which it is to be offered." (Maclaren)

ii. **Render praises:** "*Thank offerings* can be a term for literal sacrifices (e.g. Lev 7:12) and for songs of gratitude (e.g. Psa 26:7).\" (Kidner)

iii. "Reader, what hast thou *vowed* to God? To renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful desires of the flesh; to keep God's holy word and commandment; and to walk before him all the days of thy life. These things hast *thou vowed*; and these *vows* are *upon thee*. Wilt thou *pay* them?" (Clarke)

b. **You have delivered my soul from death:** On his way to Gath, in Gath, and on his way from Gath, David's life was in constant danger. God and God alone **delivered** His life from his enemies, and **kept** his **feet from falling**.

c. **That I may walk before God in the light of the living:** David knew that this was *why* God spared his life.

It wasn't so that David could do his own thing or live unto himself. It was so that he could live rightly **before God**.

i. "Thus in this short psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of Jehovah's presence, a path which only faith can tread." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The fact that Jesus seems to have used the last words of verse 13 in Joh 8:12 makes us think of verse 13 in light of the deliverance Jesus brings to those who trust him and the 'life' as his gift of salvation by the Holy Spirit." (Boice)

Let Your Glory Be over All the Earth

Psa 57:1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful, because I come to you for safety. In the shadow of your wings I find protection until the raging storms are over.

Psa 57:2 I call to God, the Most High, to God, who supplies my every need.

Psa 57:3 He will answer from heaven and save me; he will defeat my oppressors. God will show me his constant love and faithfulness.

Psa 57:4 I am surrounded by enemies, who are like lions hungry for human flesh. Their teeth are like spears and arrows; their tongues are like sharp swords.

Psa 57:5 Show your greatness in the sky, O God, and your glory over all the earth.

Psa 57:6 My enemies have spread a net to catch me; I am overcome with distress. They dug a pit in my path, but fell into it themselves.

Psa 57:7 I have complete confidence, O God; I will sing and praise you!

Psa 57:8 Wake up, my soul! Wake up, my harp and lyre! I will wake up the sun.

Psa 57:9 I will thank you, O Lord, among the nations. I will praise you among the peoples.

Psa 57:10 Your constant love reaches the heavens; your faithfulness touches the skies.

Psa 57:11 Show your greatness in the sky, O God, and your glory over all the earth.

Psalms 57:1-11

Psalms 57 – From the Cave to Above the Heavens

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."** A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave. Derek Kidner says of **Do not Destroy**: "This may well be a tune-indication: cf. Isa 65:8, where the phrase is identified as a popular saying (perhaps a snatch of vintage song), and borrowed to become a reassuring word from God. Yet notice also David's instructions about Saul, 'Destroy him not' (1Sa 26:9)."*

Charles Spurgeon noted, "There are four of these 'Destroy not' psalms, namely, the 57th, 58th, 59th, and 75th. In all of them there is a distinct declaration of the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous."

*This is another **Michtam**, or Golden Psalm. The **cave** was probably at Adullam, mentioned in 1Sa 22:1, though the caves of En Gedi (1Sa 24:1) are also a possibility. Adullam seems to be the best fit; therefore we can say that Psalms 34 is also associated with this period of David's life.*

A. A trusting soul set among lions.

1. (1-3) The trusting soul.

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!

For my soul trusts in You;

And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,

Until *these* calamities have passed by.

**I will cry out to God Most High,
To God who performs *all things* for me.
He shall send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.
Selah
God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.**

a. **Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me:** The need was so great that David repeated the request. When he fled from Saul into the cave, he had been through several near-death terrors (see Psalms 56). David came to Adullam Cave (1 Samuel 22) alone, discouraged, and in continued danger.

b. **For my soul trusts in You:** David did not say this to *earn* the mercy of God; mercy can't be earned. He said it to tell God that He was David's only hope. His **soul** trusted in God and nothing else; there was nothing else to trust in.

i. "How can the Lord be unmerciful to a trustful soul? Our faith does not deserve mercy, but it always wins it from the sovereign grace of God when it is sincere."
(Spurgeon)

c. **In the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge:** Using a familiar image David expressed his trust and hope in God for defense. The idea is of how a mother bird shields her young chicks from predators, from the elements, and from dangers by gathering them under her wings.

i. This figure of speech is also used in three other psalms (Psa 17:8; Psa 36:7; Psa 63:7). Jesus used this same word picture to show his love and desired care for Jerusalem in Mat 23:37.

ii. "Even as the parent bird completely shields her brood from evil, and meanwhile cherishes them with

the warmth of her own heart, by covering them with her wings, so do thou with me, most condescending God, for I am thine offspring, and thou hast a parent's love in perfection." (Spurgeon)

iii. Morgan connected this with Psa 55:6 (*Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest*). "There the desire was for the inefficient wings of a dove for flight. Here the sense is of the sufficient wings of God for refuge until calamities are past." (Morgan)

iv. **I will make my refuge:** We should not focus so much on what David exactly meant by **wings** that we miss the greater fact: God was his **refuge**. "We should notice that David does not call the cave his refuge, though it was a refuge in a certain physical sense. Rather it is God whom he calls his refuge." (Boice)

d. **I will cry out to God Most High...He shall send from heaven and save me:** David came to the cave alone, and God was his only help. Yet he was confident, knowing as a military man the strategic value of high ground in battle. He looked for help from the **Most High** who occupied the greatest high ground of all: **heaven**.

i. **God Most High:** "It could well have brought memories of God's good hand on Abram, another homeless man." (Kidner)

ii. **God who performs all things for me:** "It is a marvelous thing to consider God is literally willing to perform all things in us, and for us, if only we will let Him. The mischief is that most of us insist on performing all things in the energy of our own resolve, in the strength of our own power." (Meyer)

iii. **He shall send from heaven and save me:**
“Were there no human agents or earthly means that he could employ, he would send his angels from heaven to rescue me from my enemies.” (Clarke)

e. **He reproaches the one who would swallow me up:** God would speak against David’s enemies, either the Philistines or the servants of Saul. For God to speak against them would be enough to protect David and defeat them.

i. **Selah:** “The Selah at the end of the clause is unusual in the middle of a verse; but it may be intended to underscore, as it were, the impiety of the enemy, and so corresponds with the other Selah in Psa 57:6, which is also in an unusual place, and points attention to the enemy’s ruin, as this does to his wickedness.” (Maclaren)

2. (4) *The dangerous enemies.*

**My soul *is* among lions;
I lie *among* the sons of men
Who are set on fire,
Whose teeth *are* spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.**

a. **My soul is among lions:** David had many reasons to believe his enemies were much more powerful than he. In describing his great disadvantage, he hoped to appeal to the mercy of God.

i. “The allusions to lying down among lions may possibly have been suggested by the wild beasts prowling round the psalmist’s shelter.” (Maclaren)

ii. “Would any man take the Church’s picture, saith Luther? Then let him paint a silly poor maid sitting in a wood or wilderness, compassed about with hungry lions, wolves, boars, and bears.” (Trapp)

iii. Peter thought that the enemy of our soul was something like a lion against us: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1Pe 5:8)*. When we feel threatened by the devil, we may appeal to God as David did.

iv. Spurgeon gave comfort and advice to believers who felt they were **among lions**:

- If you are **among lions**, you will have fellowship with Jesus and His church.
- If you are **among lions**, you will be driven nearer to your God.
- If you are **among lions**, remember that God has them on a leash.
- If you are **among lions**, remember there is another Lion, of the Tribe of Judah.

b. **I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows**: David spoke of his enemies in fearful terms, especially noting the power of their words against him (**their tongue a sharp sword**).

i. "The horrors of a lion's den, the burning of a fiery furnace, and the cruel onset of war, are the striking images by which David here describes the peril and wretchedness of his present condition." (Morison, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "The fiercest of beasts, the most devouring of elements, and the sharpest of military weapons, are selected to represent the power and fury of David's enemies." (Horne)

3. (5) *The God-exalting refrain.*

**Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let Your glory be above all the earth.**

a. **Be exalted, O God, above the heavens:** David declared this to his own soul and unto the Lord Himself. He recognized that God was worthy to be **exalted** high above the sky (**the heavens**).

i. "The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein." (Spurgeon)

ii. "*Above the heavens*, i.e. higher than the heavens, or to the highest degree possible; or above all the false gods which are supposed to reside in heaven." (Poole)

iii. "David wants God to be exalted in his own personal circumstances and by the way he trusts and praises him even in difficulties." (Boice)

b. **Let Your glory be above all the earth:** David correctly reasoned that his problems all came from earth; he would glorify God **above all the earth**. God was worthy of David's praise and focus more than any crisis or danger on the earth.

i. "The good man interjects a verse of praise; and glorious praise *too*, seeing it comes up from the lion's den and from amid the coals of fire." (Spurgeon)

B. From the danger of the pit to praise above the heavens.

1. (6) The enemy's trap and what became of it.

**They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down;**

**They have dug a pit before me;
Into the midst of it they *themselves* have fallen. Selah**

a. **My soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me:** In the previous lines David's soul soared above the heavens. Now he is back down, in danger of going into the pit his enemies prepared to trap him.

b. **Into the midst of it they themselves have fallen:** The **pit** prepared by enemies has instead trapped those who dug it. From his circumstances as he came to the cave, we sense David said this with the anticipation of faith. It had not yet happened, but he knew that it would.

2. (7-10) *Praise from a steadfast heart.*

**My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and give praise.**

Awake, my glory!

Awake, lute and harp!

I will awaken the dawn.

I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples;

I will sing to You among the nations.

For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens,

And Your truth unto the clouds.

a. **My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast:** The psalm began with David twice appealing for mercy; now David twice expressed his **steadfast** confidence in God. Though alone in the cave and troubles behind and ahead, he could allow his **heart** to be **steadfast** in God.

i. "Fixity of heart is the secret of songs." (Morgan)

b. **I will sing and give praise:** The steadfast heart led to a singing heart. Perhaps David wished he had a **lute and harp** with him in the cave to accompany his singing of praise.

i. "With lip and with heart will I ascribe honour to thee. Satan shall not stop me, nor Saul, nor the Philistines. I will make Adullam ring with music, and all the caverns thereof echo with joyous song." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Lute and harp:** "The *psaltery* [

lute] was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. The *harp* or lyre was a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. It appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **Awake, lute and harp:** "*Rabbi Solomon Jarchi* tells us that *David had a harp at his bed's head, which played of itself when the north wind blew on it; and then David arose to give praise to God.* This account has been treated as a *ridiculous fable* by grave Christian writers." (Clarke)

c. **I will sing to You among the nations:** Even from the cave, David could envision his song of praise extending to the **nations** and **among the peoples**.

i. "Faith lifts us high above the personal sense of pain, and creates a passion for the exaltation of God among the nations." (Morgan)

ii. "These words, or their near-equivalent in Psa 18:49, are taken with full seriousness in Rom 15:9 as a prophecy which had to be fulfilled." (Kidner)

d. **Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds:** A cave narrows and darkens the vision of most people, but David's heart and song

soared **unto the clouds**. He exalted the **mercy** and **truth** of God even from difficult circumstances.

i. "A hard and ungrateful heart beholds even in prosperity only isolated drops of divine grace; but a grateful one like David's, though chased by persecutors, and striking the harp in the gloom of a cave, looks upon the mercy and faithfulness of God as a mighty ocean, waving and heaving from the earth to the clouds, and from the clouds to the earth again." (Tholuck, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "The resurrection of Jesus from the grave, foreshadowed in the deliverance of David from the hand of Saul, was a transaction which caused the heavens and all the powers therein, to extol the mercy and truth of God." (Horne)

3. (11) The God-exalting refrain.

**Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let Your glory be above all the earth.**

a. **Be exalted, O God, above the heavens:** The refrain is repeated because of its goodness and for emphasis. It's important to remember that David's circumstances were not much better when he sang this song. He was delivered from the immediate danger at Gath, but a cave was a long way from the throne of Israel which God had promised him. David didn't wait for his circumstances to change before he praised God **above the heavens**.

b. **Let Your glory be above all the earth:** We sense the freedom in David's spirit. Though in a cave, his soul glorified God **above all the earth**.

i. Kidner observed regarding the repeated refrain: "Sung now not with the defiant faith of verse 5, but with grateful love."

God Who Judges the Earth

Psa 58:1 Do you rulers ever give a just decision? Do you judge everyone fairly?

Psa 58:2 No! You think only of the evil you can do, and commit crimes of violence in the land.

Psa 58:3 Evildoers go wrong all their lives; they tell lies from the day they are born.

Psa 58:4 They are full of poison like snakes; they stop up their ears like a deaf cobra,

Psa 58:5 which does not hear the voice of the snake charmer, or the chant of the clever magician.

Psa 58:6 Break the teeth of these fierce lions, O God.

Psa 58:7 May they disappear like water draining away; may they be crushed like weeds on a path.

Psa 58:8 May they be like snails that dissolve into slime; may they be like a baby born dead that never sees the light.

Psa 58:9 Before they know it, they are cut down like weeds; in his fierce anger God will blow them away while they are still living.

Psa 58:10 The righteous will be glad when they see sinners punished; they will wade through the blood of the wicked.

Psa 58:11 People will say, "The righteous are indeed rewarded; there is indeed a God who judges the world."

Psalms 58:1-11

Psalms 58 – Words to and Against the Wicked Judges

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."** A **Michtam** of David. The phrase **Do Not Destroy** may refer to the tune, to David's determination to not destroy Saul, or to David's plea that God would not allow him to be destroyed.*

*We have noted that **Michtam** indicates golden and that they are golden psalms. Some commentators give an*

alternate meaning of Michtam, that of engraving. One commentator used that thought to picture David writing or scratching these psalms on the walls of his refuge caves.

"The proper meaning of the root of Michtam is to engrave, or to stamp a metal. It therefore, in strictness, means, an engraving or sculpture. Hence in the Septuagint, it is translated stelographia, an inscription on a column. I would venture to offer a conjecture in perfect harmony with this view. It appears by the titles of four out of these six psalms, that they were composed by David while flying and hiding from the persecutions of Saul. What, then, should hinder us from imagining that they were inscribed on the rocks and on the sides of the caves which so often formed his place of refuge? This view would accord with the strict etymological meaning of the word, and explain the rendering of the Septuagint." (Jebb, cited in Spurgeon)

A. Speaking to the wicked rulers.

1. (1-2) A challenge to wicked judges.

Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones?

Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?

No, in heart you work wickedness;

You weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.

a. **Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men:** David directed this psalm against those who were rulers or judges in some sense. Some think they were leaders aligned with Saul who passed judgment on the fugitive David, condemning him to a death sentence as a traitor. David challenged these rulers and the uprightness of their decisions.

i. We picture David as a fugitive, perhaps at Adullam Cave. He hears from a messenger that some assembled court of leaders close to King Saul has met and judicially condemned him as a traitor, worthy of

death. David is outraged at the injustice of it and proclaims this psalm.

ii. "Saul having attempted the life of David, the latter was obliged to flee from the court, and take refuge in the deserts of Judea. Saul, missing him, is supposed by Bishop *Patrick* to have called a council, when they, to ingratiate themselves with the monarch, adjudged David to be guilty of treason in aspiring to the throne of Israel. This being made known to David was the cause of this psalm." (Clarke)

iii. John Trapp had his own idea: "David here talketh to Abner and the rest, who, to please Saul, pronounced David a rebel, and condemned him absent for an enemy to the state." (Trapp)

iv. "Rather than limiting the sense of 'judge' to legal disputes, it may be well to be guided by the usage of the same Hebrew root in Psa 58:11 and in Psa 98:9 b: 'govern' or 'rule.'" (VanGemeren)

v. David was outraged at corruption, perhaps because he now felt the sting of it. It's human nature to not care much about government and legal corruption until it personally hurts us.

b. Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones: There is some question about the best way to translate the original here given as **silent ones**. Taking the text as it is, David challenged those leaders who should have defended him or other innocents but instead stayed **silent**.

i. "The interrogation, are ye *indeed*, expresses wonder, as at something scarcely credible. Can it be so? Is it possible? Are you really silent, you, whose very office is to speak for God, and against the sins of men?" (Alexander, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "The problem is that these judges did not speak up for the right course of action when evil was being planned." (Boice)

iii. Some translations (such as the NIV) follow a different manuscript tradition and translate **silent ones** as *rulers*.

c. **No, in your heart you work wickedness:** After questioning the words and justice of his enemies, David examined their intentions and their actions. Their intention was to **work wickedness** and in their actions they dispensed **violence** in the earth.

i. "The Psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but they did work it there: the heart is a shop within, an under-ground shop; there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions." (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. David said they **weigh out the violence** against others; with careful thought and deliberation they gave it out. "As righteous judges ponder the law, balance the evidence, and weigh the case, so the malicious dispense injustice with malice aforethought in cold blood." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-5) *A description of the wicked rulers.*

**The wicked are estranged from the womb;
They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.**

**Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent;
They are like the deaf cobra *that* stops its ear,
Which will not heed the voice of charmers,
Charming ever so skillfully.**

a. **The wicked are estranged from the womb:** David diagnosed the problem of the judges; they were **wicked**

at the root, in their nature, from birth. David understood this of all humanity including himself (Psa 51:5).

i. "The description in verses 3ff. is close enough to what is quoted in Rom 3:10 ff. to warn the reader that he faces a mirror, not only a portrait." (Kidner)

ii. "G.K. Chesterson said that the doctrine of original sin is the only philosophy that has been empirically validated by thirty-five hundred years of human history." (Boice)

iii. "Sinful, indeed, we are all by nature, and a birth-blot we bring into the world with us, making us strangers and strayers from God." (Trapp)

iv. In the next few verses, "Figure is heaped on figure in a fashion suggestive of intense emotion." (Maclaren)

b. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies: Their corrupt nature was evident early in life, especially in their words. No one has to *teach* a child how to lie; with some poetic hyperbole we can say they **are born, speaking lies**.

i. "To be untruthful is one of the surest proofs of a fallen state, and since falsehood is universal, so also is human depravity." (Spurgeon)

c. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: The **lies** are not harmless; they are like **poison**. The words of judges and rulers have special power to oppress others, and their **poison** is more deadly. The words of these judges were as dangerous as a deadly, unpredictable **cobra**.

i. "The wicked are as dangerous as the venomous cobra that bites his trainer when touched and handled by him." (VanGemeren)

B. Speaking to God who judges the wicked.

1. (6-8) *David calls upon God to ruin the wicked.*

Break their teeth in their mouth, O God!

Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!

Let them flow away as waters *which* run continually;

When he bends his bow,

Let his arrows be as if cut in pieces.

Let them be like a snail which melts away as it goes,

Like a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

a. **Break their teeth in their mouth, O God:** David prayed that God would take vengeance on these dangerous judges. The power of serpents and **lions** was in their **fangs**; David asked God to take away their deadly bite.

i. "The imprecatory nature of the prayer may seem strange to our ears, but the radical nature of evil requires a response from the God of justice." (VanGemeren)

ii. "If they have no capacity for good, at least deprive them of their ability for evil." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Fangs:** "*The great teeth, called the grinders, which are more sharp and strong than the rest, and more used in breaking and tearing what they are about to eat.*" (Poole)

b. **Let them flow away as waters which run continually:** David asked for the rapid and complete dispersion of these men and their power – **like a snail which melts as it goes away.**

i. "Let them be minished away like the waters which sometimes run in the desert, but are soon evaporated by the *sun*, or absorbed by the *sand*." (Clarke)

ii. "A slug does not actually melt away as it moves along the ground leaving its slimy trail behind. But it seems to." (Boice)

c. **Like a stillborn child:** With a severe and startling image, David prayed for the death of his enemies, or rather that they had never been born to see the light of day.

i. "Their life comes never to ripeness, their aims are abortive, their only achievement is to have brought misery to others, and horror to themselves. Such men as Herod, Judas, Alva, Bonner, had it not been better for them if they had never been born?" (Spurgeon)

2. (9-11) *David's confidence in God's judgment.*

**Before your pots can feel *the burning* thorns,
He shall take them away as with a whirlwind,
As in His living and burning wrath.
The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the
vengeance;
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,
So that men will say,
"Surely *there is* a reward for the righteous;
Surely He is God who judges in the earth."**

a. **Before your pots can feel the burning thorns:** The Hebrew of these lines is difficult but the thought may be that David considered how quickly a bunch of dry **thorns** burn in a fire under cooking **pots**. David prayed that God's judgment would come upon his enemies like a flash of fire.

b. **The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance:** David thought of the happiness coming to the **righteous** at God's judgment on these unjust and oppressive rulers, as if **the righteous** walked the

victorious field of battle with God (**his feet in the blood of the wicked**).

i. "If it is right in God to destroy, it cannot be wrong in His servants to rejoice that He does. Only they have to take heed that their emotion is untarnished by selfish gratulation, and is not untinged with solemn pity for those who were indeed doers of evil, but were themselves the greatest sufferers from their evil." (Maclaren)

ii. "It is a sickly sentimentality and a wicked weakness that have more sympathy with the corrupt oppressors than with the anger of God." (Morgan)

iii. When it comes to rejoicing in God's victory over those who wickedly oppress others, "The New Testament will, if anything, outdo this language in speaking of the day of reckoning (e.g. Rev 14:19 f; Rev 19:11 ff.), while repudiating carnal weapons for the spiritual war (Rev 12:11)." (Kidner)

iv. "It is hard, but not impossible, to take all that is expressed in the psalm, and to soften it by some effluence from the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem, and yet pronounced its doom." (Maclaren)

c. Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely He is God who judges the earth: David desired the world to see there was a moral order under God where righteousness is rewarded and wickedness is judged. He longed for the justice that these wicked rulers denied.

i. "All men shall be forced by the sight of the final judgment to see that there is a God, and that he is the righteous ruler of the universe. Two things will come out clearly after all – there is a God and there is a reward for the righteous." (Spurgeon)

ii. **A reward for the righteous:** "Yes, child of God, there is a reward for thee. It is not in vain that thou hast washed thy hands in innocency. But it will not come in the coinage or honour of this age, else it would be evanescent and perishable. God is already giving thee of the eternal and divine – peace, joy, blessedness; and one day thou shalt be fully vindicated." (Meyer)

Deliver Me from My Enemies

Psa 59:1 Save me from my enemies, my God; protect me from those who attack me!

Psa 59:2 Save me from those evil people; rescue me from those murderers!

Psa 59:3 Look! They are waiting to kill me; cruel people are gathering against me. It is not because of any sin or wrong I have done,

Psa 59:4 nor because of any fault of mine, O LORD, that they hurry to their places.

Psa 59:5 Rise, LORD God Almighty, and come to my aid; see for yourself, God of Israel! Wake up and punish the heathen; show no mercy to evil traitors!

Psa 59:6 They come back in the evening, snarling like dogs as they go about the city.

Psa 59:7 Listen to their insults and threats. Their tongues are like swords in their mouths, yet they think that no one hears them.

Psa 59:8 But you laugh at them, LORD; you mock all the heathen.

Psa 59:9 I have confidence in your strength; you are my refuge, O God.

Psa 59:10 My God loves me and will come to me; he will let me see my enemies defeated.

Psa 59:11 Do not kill them, O God, or my people may forget. Scatter them by your strength and defeat them, O Lord, our protector.

Psa 59:12 Sin is on their lips; all their words are sinful; may they be caught in their pride! Because they curse and lie,

Psa 59:13 destroy them in your anger; destroy them completely. Then everyone will know that God rules in Israel, that his rule extends over all the earth.

Psa 59:14 My enemies come back in the evening, snarling like dogs as they go about the city,

Psa 59:15 like dogs roaming about for food and growling if they do not find enough.

Psa 59:16 But I will sing about your strength; every morning I will sing aloud of your constant love. You have been a refuge for me, a shelter in my time of trouble.

Psa 59:17 I will praise you, my defender. My refuge is God, the God who loves me.

Psalms 59:1-17

Psalms 59 – Praise to My High Tower Against Assassins

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."** A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him. This refers to the incident in 1Sa 19:11-12, which was when the murderous intent of King Saul against David was openly revealed, and David began his long season of living as a fugitive.*

A. David describes the bloodthirsty assassins.

1. (1-2) A prayer for deliverance and defense.

**Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Defend me from those who rise up against me.**

**Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from bloodthirsty men.**

a. **Deliver me from my enemies, O my God:** Many were David's perils, many were his enemies, and many were the psalms that begin with this thought. We think it strange that the man after God's heart, Israel's greatest earthly king, had so many enemies. The idea is less strange when we think of how many enemies the Son of David had.

i. David cried out, **O my God**, meaning it in the most reverent way. Through this psalm David declared his close and personal connection with God.

- My God (Psa 59:1).
- My Defense (Psa 59:9; Psa 59:17).
- My God of mercy (Psa 59:10; Psa 59:17).
- My Strength (Psa 59:9; Psa 59:17).

ii. We wish that those who thoughtlessly exclaim **O my God** today would change and do so with the heart and sense of personal trust that David had.

b. **Defend me:** The sense of this ancient Hebrew word is *to lift up*, as into a safe and defended place. It says, "Lift me up to Your high tower where I am even higher above **those who rise up against me.**" This idea is repeated three more times in the psalm (59:9, 16, 17).

i. "The word protect [**defend**] (59:1), like the kindred word 'fortress' [*defense*] (59:9, 16, 17), contains the thought of what is set high up, out of reach." (Kidner)

ii. "He is a high tower or place of refuge and retreat to the soul in trouble and danger." (Morgan)

c. **Save me from bloodthirsty men:** David was the target of a focused assassination plot that came from the

highest levels of Israel's government. Many felt they could advance their favor before King Saul by shedding David's blood. Knowing the danger, David looked to God for rescue and defense.

2. (3-5) Describing the need.

**For look, they lie in wait for my life;
The mighty gather against me,
Not *for* my transgression nor *for* my sin, O LORD.
They run and prepare themselves through no fault of mine.**

**Awake to help me, and behold!
You therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah**

a. **For look, they lie in wait for my life:** The circumstances of 1Sa 19:11-12 must have amazed David. Assassins came against his own home, hoping to surprise him in the routines of daily life. David saw **the mighty gather against** him and looked to God for help.

b. **Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD:** David didn't make a claim to sinless perfection. He simply understood and said to God that there was no justified reason at all for Saul to send the bloodthirsty assassins against him.

i. **They run and prepare themselves:** "The zeal and diligence of the wicked in the cause of unrighteousness might well reprove the languor and tardiness of saints in the work of faith and labour of love. In the church of God nothing is the source of more mischief than the want of true zeal and liveliness." (Plumer, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Awake to help me, and behold:** David feared he would die if God were asleep to his need. He asked God to be active for him and to look (**behold**) upon his crisis.

d. **O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel:** David appealed to God with a variety of His names and titles.

- He was *Yahweh*, the covenant God of Israel (**LORD**).
- He was *Elohim Sabaoth*, the commander of heavenly armies (**God of hosts**).
- He was *Elohi Israel*, the God of His chosen people (**God of Israel**).

i. "The petitions in Psa 59:5 are remarkable, both in their accumulation of the Divine names and in their apparent transcending of the suppliant's need.... Each name suggests something in God which encourages hope, and when appealed to by a trusting soul, moves Him to act." (Maclaren)

e. **Awake to punish all the nations:** The hope of God setting things right in David's cause made the psalmist think of God setting things right on a global scale. David looked to the God of angelic armies (**LORD God of hosts**) to judge the nations and all **wicked transgressors**.

i. "The psalmist looks for his own deliverance as one instance of that world-wide manifestation of Divine justice which will 'render to every man according to his deeds.'" (Maclaren)

ii. **Selah:** "'*Selah*,' assuredly God will have them in derision; '*Selah*,' assuredly God shall shiver their bones, shake their best actions, and discover their impurity; '*Selah*,' assuredly God's hand shall be heavy upon them, and they shall not discern it to be his hand till they are consumed. '*Selah*,' assuredly, verily,

amen, this is a faithful, an infallible truth; as the Lord liveth it shall be so." (Wright, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (6-7) *The proud arrogance of David's enemies.*

**At evening they return,
They growl like a dog,
And go all around the city.
Indeed, they belch with their mouth;
Swords are in their lips;
For they say, "Who hears?"**

a. **At evening they return, they growl like a dog:**

The men sent to watch David's house and kill him were determined. They didn't give up quickly and they growled like dangerous dogs, going **all around the city** to find and murder David.

i. "David called them dogs, and no doubt a pretty pack they were, a cursed cursing company of curs." (Spurgeon)

ii. "*They make a noise like a dog*; either when he is hungry and pursuing his prey, and howls for meat; or when he is enraged, and grins and snarls where he cannot or dare not bite." (Poole)

iii. "There is some uncertainty over the word *growl*, which is the expression used for the Israelites' 'murmuring' – one might almost say 'whining' in the wilderness, and makes excellent sense." (Kidner)

b. **They belch with their mouth; swords are in their lips:** Perhaps David actually saw and heard such a **belch** as he watched those who watched him. He heard their sharp words against him, and their disregard for God or David or any authority (**Who hears?**).

i. **They belch:** "The word rendered (A.V. [King James Version] and R.V. [Revised Version]) 'belch' means to gush out, and is found in a good sense in Psa 19:1.

Here it may perhaps be taken as meaning 'foam,' with some advantage to the truth of the picture." (Maclaren)

ii. "The root idea is of bubbling up and bursting out; so in terms of dogs Jerusalem Bible has 'See how they slaver at the mouth.'" (Kidner)

iii. **Who hears:** "David doth not hear us, either to discover, and so to prevent our plots; or to punish us for them; and God either doth not hear or not regard what we say and do against David; and therefore we may speak and act what we think fit." (Poole)

B. God's response to the bloodthirsty men.

1. (8-10) *David's strong confidence in God.*

**But You, O LORD, shall laugh at them;
You shall have all the nations in derision.
I will wait for You, O You his Strength;
For God *is* my defense.
My God of mercy shall come to meet me;
God shall let me see *my desire* on my enemies.**

a. **But You, O LORD, shall laugh at them:** David's danger from the assassins was real and fearful. Yet he understood that they were nothing against God. The LORD could simply **laugh** at them and their arrogant claim that God did not hear or care about their evil.

b. **You shall have all the nations in derision:** David saw God's laugh against the men who waited outside his house to kill him in connection with God's triumph over **all the nations**. All who opposed God would be held **in derision**.

c. **God is my defense:** The word **defense** has the idea of a high tower or fortress. David believed that God was like a strong, high tower for him. It seemed impossible for David to survive against such a powerful conspiracy

against him, but God would be his **defense**, his high tower.

i. “*For God is my defence,*’ my high place, my fortress, the place of my resort in the time of my danger. If the foe be too strong for me to cope with him, I will retreat into my castle, where he cannot reach me.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “There is perhaps no more beautiful description of what God is to His tried people. The phrase suggests at once strength and peace. A tower against which all the might of the foe hurls itself in vain.” (Morgan)

d. **My God of mercy shall come to meet me:** David didn’t only believe that the LORD was the **God of mercy** in a distant, theoretical sense. He could confidently say, **My God of mercy**. He knew that God would be merciful to him and that God would **meet** him, even lead him, in his need.

i. **Shall come to meet me:** “The word *meet* (59:10a) is vivid: It is based on the idea of what is ‘in front’ of someone, usually in the sense of confronting them by coming to meet them, as in the beautiful phrase of Psa 21:3. But it can alternatively imply going in front to lead the way.” (Kidner)

ii. Meyer considered that Psa 59:9-10 uses three titles for God that are precious for the troubled believer: **my God of mercy**, **my defense** [high tower], and **strength**.

iii. “Meditate on these three attributes. He is the God of your mercy, the Fountain from which pure mercy flows, and nothing but mercy; He is your High Tower, whom you may put between yourself and Saul’s hate, He is your Strength, not that you receive strength

from Him, but that you appropriate Him as your strength." (Meyer)

iv. **God shall let me see *my desire* on my enemies:** "Observe that the words, '*my desire*,' are not in the original. From the Hebrew we are taught that David expected to see his enemies without fear. God will enable his servant to gaze steadily upon the foe without trepidation; he shall be calm, and self-possessed, in the hour of peril." (Spurgeon)

2. (11-13) *David asks that his enemies be defeated to bring God glory.*

**Do not slay them, lest my people forget;
Scatter them by Your power,
And bring them down,
O Lord our shield.**

***For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips,
Let them even be taken in their pride,
And for the cursing and lying which they speak.
Consume them in wrath, consume them,
That they may not be;
And let them know that God rules in Jacob
To the ends of the earth. Selah***

a. **Do not slay them, lest my people forget; scatter them:** David didn't only want the defeat of his enemies. He wanted them defeated in a way that would do the most good for God's **people**. If those enemies were kept alive but scattered, the lesson would last longer.

i. **Lest my people forget** reminds us that whenever David prayed for the destruction of his enemies (and sometimes he prayed quite severely), he had in mind not only his personal deliverance but also what the display of Divine justice would teach God's **people**.

ii. “Hereby it most plainly appears that David, in these and the like imprecations against his enemies, was not moved thereunto by his private malice, or desire of revenge, but by the respect which he had to God’s honour and the general good of his people.” (Poole)

b. **For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride:** David seemed especially offended at the proud words he overheard from the men who hoped to ambush him. With **cursing and lying** they boasted of David’s death and their own advancement through it.

c. **Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be:** Just a few lines before David prayed that God would **not slay them**; now he repeated the prayer **consume them** twice for emphasis. There is no contradiction; we see that such prayers simply expressed David’s desire that God “get them,” and he didn’t care much about how God got them.

d. **Let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth:** What David did care about was God’s honor and glory. David prayed that the way God dealt with these bloodthirsty assassins would tell **the ends of the earth** something about God’s righteous rule in the world.

i. **Let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth:** These words are very similar to what David said to Goliath in 1Sa 17:46, an event that happened not very long before Saul sent the assassins after David. He discerned that these enemies acted very Goliath-like.

3. (14-15) *The abiding danger.*

**And at evening they return,
They growl like a dog,**

**And go all around the city.
They wander up and down for food,
And howl if they are not satisfied.**

a. **At evening they return, and growl like a dog:** The line from Psa 59:6 is repeated for emphasis. We sense David peeking through a window at the assassins surrounding his house and seeing them for the pack of dangerous dogs that they are.

b. **They wander up and down for food, and howl if they are not satisfied:** As David watched them, he noticed them **wander** the streets around his house the way hungry dogs hunt for food.

4. (16-17) Singing praise despite the danger.

**But I will sing of Your power;
Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning;
For You have been my defense
And refuge in the day of my trouble.
To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises;
For God *is* my defense,
My God of mercy.**

a. **But I will sing of Your power:** The murdering dogs howl in the street, but David will **sing** of God's **power** and **mercy**. They wait for him in the evening, but David was confident that with God as his **defense** and **refuge**, he would survive until **morning** and survive singing.

i. "While the wicked are howling, growling, and snarling (vv. 14-15), the servant of God praises the Lord instead." (VanGemeren)

b. **To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises:** Though a conspiracy to kill him still existed in the highest places of the kingdom, David's heart was filled with songs of praise instead of dark fears. He started the psalm asking God for His defense (Psa 59:1); at the end of the

psalm he was so confident that **God is my defense** that he could sing about it.

i. It is easy to read **I will sing** and **I will sing aloud** and **I will sing praises** and assume that the same wording is repeated. Kidner observed that these three phrases used three different words. "Three different words are used for this, which might be rendered 'I will sing...I will shout (59:16); I will raise a psalm (59:17).'" (Kidner)

ii. When King Saul sent assassins to David's house, he openly revealed his desire to kill David. From then on, for the next many years (perhaps 10 to 15 years), David had to live as a fugitive, constantly in danger of his life. It's interesting to notice that David entered that period singing praises and was still able to pour out his heart to God in song at the end of that period (2Sa 1:17-27).

He Will Tread Down Our Foes

Psa 60:1 You have rejected us, God, and defeated us; you have been angry with us—but now turn back to us.

Psa 60:2 You have made the land tremble, and you have cut it open; now heal its wounds, because it is falling apart.

Psa 60:3 You have made your people suffer greatly; we stagger around as though we were drunk.

Psa 60:4 You have warned those who have reverence for you, so that they might escape destruction.

Psa 60:5 Save us by your might; answer our prayer, so that the people you love may be rescued.

Psa 60:6 From his sanctuary God has said, "In triumph I will divide Shechem and distribute Sukkoth Valley to my people.

Psa 60:7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh too; Ephraim is my helmet and Judah my royal scepter.

Psa 60:8 But I will use Moab as my washbowl, and I will throw my sandals on Edom, as a sign that I own it. Did the Philistines think they would shout in triumph over me?"

Psa 60:9 Who, O God, will take me into the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

Psa 60:10 Have you really rejected us? Aren't you going to march out with our armies?

Psa 60:11 Help us against the enemy; human help is worthless.

Psa 60:12 With God on our side we will win; he will defeat our enemies.

Psalms 60:1-12

Psalms 60 – From Defeat to Victory in God

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. Set to "Lily of the Testimony."** A Michtam of David. For teaching. When he fought against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.*

Lily of the Testimony *may refer to an instrument or to a tune.*

*This is a **Michtam**, a golden psalm of David, intended **for teaching**, to instruct his present and future generations, especially about relying upon God and nothing else in conflict.*

*The historical markers **against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt** place it sometime in the earlier part of King David's reign, when he subjected neighboring nations. 2Sa 8:1-8 records David's victories over Philistia, Moab, and Syria. 2Sa 10:1-19 tells of David's victories over Ammon and Syria. 1Ch 18:11-13 gives us*

*David's victories over Edom (and specifically in the **Valley of Salt**), Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Amalek.*

The victories described in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles do not mention the kind of setbacks lamented in this psalm. It reminds us that the historical record often condenses events, and that the successes were real, yet not always immediate.

A. The defeated nation.

1. (1-3) A plea for mercy from God who has afflicted His people.

**O God, You have cast us off;
You have broken us down;
You have been displeased;
Oh, restore us again!
You have made the earth tremble;
You have broken it;
Heal its breaches, for it is shaking.
You have shown Your people hard things;
You have made us drink the wine of confusion.**

a. **O God, You have cast us off; You have broken us down:** David and the armies of Israel fought against foreign armies and experienced some measure of defeat. David knew that when the Lord fought for Israel, victory was assured; if there was defeat, it was likely because of God's displeasure. Therefore David appealed to what he believed to be the ultimate cause, not the immediate cause.

i. Worse than defeat was the sense of separation from God. "God's people live a meaningless existence without his presence. They take defeat seriously, because divine abandonment is the most miserable condition." (VanGemeren)

ii. "But for this psalm and its title we should have had no inkling of the resilience of David's hostile neighbours at the peak of his power." (Kidner)

b. **Oh, restore us again:** If in some way God had caused the defeat of Israel, it did not discourage David from appealing to Him that His favor be restored. This cry, **restore us again**, immediately brings hope to the matter.

i. "To be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befall a man or a people; but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it. When the divine desertion causes mourning and repentance, it will be but partial and temporary." (Spurgeon)

c. **You have made the earth tremble:** David felt as if the whole earth shook at the defeat of God's people, yet the God who could shake the earth could also **heal its breaches**.

d. **You have shown Your people hard things; You have made us drink the wine of confusion:** Israel's defeat was hard to understand, and there were many other aspects of their situation that caused David **confusion**. Still, there was a kind of comfort in understanding that God was the author of it all, because what God does in judgment or discipline, He can restore in love and mercy.

i. "*Thou hast showed thy people hard things*, God will be sure to plough his own ground, whatsoever becometh of the waste; and to weed his own garden, though the rest of the world should be let alone to grow wild." (Trapp)

ii. **The wine of confusion:** "We reel as *drunken* men; we are *giddy*, like those who have drank too

much wine; but *our giddiness* has been occasioned by the *astonishment* and *dismay* that have taken place in consequence of the prevalence of our enemies, and the unsettled state of the land.” (Clarke)

iii. “So far gone was Israel, that only God’s interposition could preserve it from utter destruction. How often have we seen churches in this condition, and how suitable is the prayer before us, in which the extremity of the need is used as an argument for help.” (Spurgeon)

2. (4-5) *Hope in His deliverance.*

**You have given a banner to those who fear You,
That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah
That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save *with* Your right hand, and hear me.**

a. **You have given a banner to those who fear You:**
David felt that God had cast off and broken Israel, yet he would not stop flying the **banner** of allegiance and trust in God. The **truth** about God – who He is and what He has done – demanded that this banner be **displayed**.

i. “He gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that he had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The concept of the **banner** was connected to Israel’s reliance upon God and His victory for them. “When Amalek fought against Israel in Rephidim, victory came to the people of God as Moses, supported by Aaron and Hur, prayed on the mount and Joshua went forth to battle. After the victory Moses built an altar, and called the name of it ‘Jehovah Nissi,’ that is, Jehovah our Banner.” (Morgan)

iii. **Selah**: “Note the ‘Selah’ at this point, suggesting especial attention to this fact. For the sake of that banner the cry for deliverance is raised.” (Morgan)

b. **That Your beloved may be delivered**: Claiming himself as God’s **beloved**, despite the present defeat, David understood that his rescue would be found in *greater* allegiance to God, not less.

i. **Beloved**: “The Hebrew word belongs to the language of love poetry; it appeals to the strongest of bonds, the most ardent of relationships.” (Kidner)

B. The victorious God.

1. (6-8) *God’s word of triumph over the nations.*

God has spoken in His holiness:

“I will rejoice;

I will divide Shechem

And measure out the Valley of Succoth.

Gilead *is* Mine, and Manasseh *is* Mine;

Ephraim also *is* the helmet for My head;

Judah *is* My lawgiver.

Moab *is* My washpot;

Over Edom I will cast My shoe;

Philistia, shout in triumph because of Me.”

a. **I will rejoice**: Speaking as an inspired prophet, David understood the words God Himself spoke. God Himself would **rejoice** in His Lordship over Israel and His victory over the nations.

b. **I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth**: With these and the following lines, God proclaimed how the land of Israel was His special possession. The specific mentions of **Shechem**, of the **Valley of Succoth**, of **Gilead**, of **Manasseh**, of **Ephraim**, and of **Judah** show that God did not speak symbolically, but geographically. Though He is Lord over

all the earth, He has a special care and regard for the land of Israel.

i. As the nations battled, it was as if David understood the LORD to step forward and settle the disputes with His authority. "It is no longer a matter of rivals fighting for possession, but of the lord of the manor parceling out his lands and employments exactly as it suits him." (Kidner)

ii. "Ephraim is called a 'helmet' (literally, 'the strength of my head'), symbolic of force; Judah is a 'scepter' (cf. Gen 49:10), symbolic of dominion and governance." (VanGemeren)

iii. "Note the repeated *mine* and *my*, for everything is His, not theirs, and those to whom He gives it are His tenants and stewards. Yet it is theirs all the more securely for that." (Kidner)

c. Moab is My washpot; over Edom I will cast My shoe: God also said that He would exalt Himself over the surrounding nations. Both Moab and Edom were noted for their pride (Isa 16:6, Oba 1:3). Here God gives them places of humble service.

i. "The picture of Moab coming with a washbasin for the warrior to wash his feet represents her subjugation to servant status." (VanGemeren)

ii. "*Will I cast out my shoe*, i.e. I will use them like slaves; either holding forth my shoes, that they may pluck them off; or throwing my shoes at them, either in anger or contempt, as the manner of many masters was and is in such cases." (Poole)

2. (9-12) Renewed trust in the God who helps.

Who will bring me to the strong city?

Who will lead me to Edom?

Is it not You, O God, who cast us off?

**And You, O God, *who did not go out with our armies?*
Give us help from trouble,
For the help of man *is* useless.
Through God we will do valiantly,
For *it is* He *who* shall tread down our enemies.**

a. **Who will lead me to Edom? Is it not You, O God, who cast us off:** David knew that their previous defeat was because God did not fight for them, **who did not go out with our armies**. He trusted that God would **lead** Israel to victory over **the strong city**.

i. **The strong city:** "When David speaks of '*the fortified city*' he can only mean Petra, the most inaccessible and apparently impregnable mountain stronghold of Edom. Only God could give victory over a fortress like that, and David knew it. So he cries to God, acknowledging that '*the help of man is worthless.*'" (Boice)

b. **Give us help from trouble, for the help of man is useless:** David had seen many brave men accomplish great things on the field of battle. Yet for David and for Israel, the help of man was not enough; indeed, it was **useless**. God's help would lead them to victory.

i. "*For vain is the help of man.* As they had lately experimented in *Saul*, a king of their own choosing, but not able to save them from those proud Philistines." (Trapp)

ii. "The king is not looking for a military solution to his problems, such as alliances with other kings, because he knows that their '*help is worthless.*'" (VanGemeren)

c. **Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies:** David understood that it wasn't God's desire for Israel to leave

off fighting and passively see what God would do. Instead, they would fight, but fight **through God**. Their fighting through God would be brave and valiant, and in it they would see God **tread down our enemies**. The psalm that began in defeat would end in victory.

i. **We will do valiantly**: "Divine working is not an argument for human inaction, but rather is it the best excitement for courageous effort." (Spurgeon)

ii. "For our part, there will be valiant deeds; for God's part, there will be not only His hand on ours, but His foot on the enemy." (Kidner)

Lead Me to the Rock

Psa 61:1 Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer!

Psa 61:2 In despair and far from home I call to you! Take me to a safe refuge,

Psa 61:3 for you are my protector, my strong defense against my enemies.

Psa 61:4 Let me live in your sanctuary all my life; let me find safety under your wings.

Psa 61:5 You have heard my promises, O God, and you have given me what belongs to those who honor you.

Psa 61:6 Add many years to the king's life; let him live on and on!

Psa 61:7 May he rule forever in your presence, O God; protect him with your constant love and faithfulness.

Psa 61:8 So I will always sing praises to you, as I offer you daily what I have promised.

Psalms 61:1-8

Psalms 61 – Hope and Help When My Heart is Overwhelmed

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. On a stringed instrument. A Psalm of David.** David was often in trouble; we don't know the life circumstances which prompted this psalm. It does seem to come after he came to the throne. Because of a reference to the end of the earth, some have thought it comes from the time of Absalom's rebellion or on his military campaign near the Euphrates (2Sa 8:3-4). Those are possible, but by no means certain settings for this psalm.*

On a stringed instrument: "The word Neginah (the singular of Neginoth) may be understood to be synonymous with the kinnor or harp: that is to say, the instrument of eight strings, probably played with a bow or plectrum." (John Jebb, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. The prayer.

1. (1-2) *Crying out for rescue when overwhelmed.*

Hear my cry, O God;

Attend to my prayer.

From the end of the earth I will cry to You,

When my heart is overwhelmed;

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

a. **Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer:** This was wise praying from David. He understood that though God hears all prayer in one sense, in the sense of answering and responding favorably, God does not **hear** or **attend** to all prayer. Opening his prayer this way, David did not presume a response from God, but actively asked for the response.

i. "Pharisees may rest in their prayers; true believers are eager for an answer to them: ritualists may be satisfied when they have 'said or sung' their litanies and collects, but living children of God will never rest

till their supplications have entered the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.” (Spurgeon)

b. From the end of the earth I will cry to You: From what we know, David did not travel far outside the Promised Land. Yet figuratively he was at the end of human understanding and strength and resources; there was a real and powerful sense in which this prayer was offered **from the end of the earth**.

i. “Though the phrase ‘from the ends of the earth’ may denote a geographical distance away from the land (cf. Psa 46:9; Deu 28:49), it is also a metaphor for despair, alienation, and spiritual distance from the Lord.” (VanGemeren)

ii. David did not say, *from the end of the earth I will give up hope* or *from the end of the earth I will deny that You love me*. At the limit of his wisdom, endurance, and ability, David said, **I will cry to You**.

iii. “Observe that David never dreamed of seeking any other God; he did not imagine the dominion of Jehovah to be local: he was at the end of the promised land, but he knew himself to be still in the territory of the Great King.” (Spurgeon)

c. When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I: David knew there would be times when his heart was **overwhelmed**. In those moments he needed at least three things.

- He needed **the rock**, a place of stability and security, something strong enough to stand against crashing waves or quaking earth.
- He needed a rock **that is higher than I**, a place above himself, above his wisdom, above his abilities.

- He needed God to **lead** him to that rock. David was unable to get to the firm-footed place above his crisis on his own.

i. **Overwhelmed**: The same word is translated *faints* in Jon 2:7. "Here David had the added trial of depression or exhaustion; *cf.* the same word...[is found] in the title of Psalms 102, where the condition is subsequently described at some length." (Kidner)

ii. We are not told why David was **overwhelmed**, and it is better that we do not know. If we knew his specific circumstances, we would be strongly tempted to limit God's rescue only to those in the same situation. God wanted this prayer to be prayed by His people no matter the reason their **heart is overwhelmed**.

iii. **To the rock**: "The thought of God being a rock is prominent in the Davidic psalms because David had used the rocks of the Judean wilderness as places of refuge and protection." (Boice)

iv. "His imagination sees towering above him a great cliff, on which, if he could be planted, he might defy pursuit or assault. But he is distant from it, and the inaccessibility which, were he in its clefts, would be his safety, is now his despair. Therefore he turns to God and asks Him to bear him up in His hands, that he may set his foot on that rock." (Maclaren)

d. **To the rock that is higher than I**: Assuming David wrote this as king, humanly speaking he had reached the top of the ladder. He still realized that wasn't enough, and needed something higher than himself.

i. **That is higher than I**: "Thus his prayer was for elevation above self in God." (Morgan)

ii. Ultimately Jesus Christ is the **Rock that is higher than I**. "Higher than I, because of His divine origin; higher, because of His perfect obedience; higher, because of His supreme sufferings; higher, because of his ascension to the right hand of power." (Meyer)

2. (3-4) *Present trust based on past faithfulness.*

**For You have been a shelter for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.
I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah**

a. **For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy:** David remembered that God had answered such prayers in the past. In the past God *Himself* had been a **shelter** and **strong tower** for David.

b. **I will abide in Your tabernacle forever:** The word **tabernacle** is simply the word for *tent*. David had one of two (or perhaps both) ideas in mind:

- The *tent of God* as a refuge for the weary traveler, the place where protection and hospitality are given to the honored guest.
- The *tent of God* as the tabernacle of meeting, the center of Israel's sacrifice and worship.

i. "The imagery of dwelling in the tent goes back to the desert experience (cf. Exo 33:7-11; Num 11:16-17) when the Lord resided among the tribes of Israel in a tent." (VanGemeren)

ii. "He saith not, I shall abide in my palace, but in thy tabernacle, which he more highly esteemed." (Trapp)

c. **I will trust in the shelter of Your wings:** Again there may be one of two ideas or the conscious reference to both ideas.

- **Wings** as the near and protected place that a mother bird gives to her offspring, protecting her chicks under **the shelter** of her **wings**.

- **Wings** as that which marked and surrounded the interior of God's tabernacle of meeting and the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant, which included the designs of cherubim and their **wings**.

d. **A shelter...a strong tower...Your tabernacle...the shelter of Your wings:** With image after image, David built upon the idea of *the rock that is higher than I* first stated in Psa 61:2. No one image could fully express the greatness of God's help to David.

B. The answer to the prayer.

1. (5-7) *God's care for King David.*

For You, O God, have heard my vows;

You have given *me* the heritage of those who fear Your name.

You will prolong the king's life,

His years as many generations.

He shall abide before God forever.

Oh, prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him!

a. **For You, O God, have heard my vows:** David probably referred to past vows of grateful allegiance to God, which he continued to honor. God **heard** these vows and responded to them, giving David rule over God's people (**the heritage of those who fear Your name**).

i. **You, O God, have heard my vows:** "Often have I purposed to be wholly thine, – to serve thee alone, – to give up my whole life to thy service: and thou hast heard me, and taken me at my word; and given me that heritage, the privilege of enjoying thee in thy

ordinances, which is the lot of them that *fear thy name*." (Clarke)

b. **You will prolong the king's life:** David confidently expected God's blessing upon his reign. It was not because he thought so highly of himself; it was because he thought so highly of the God who keeps His promises.

i. "Long 'life' (literally, 'days') is an idiom for the prosperity of the reigning monarch as well as for the preservation of his dynasty, similar to the British 'God save the queen.'" (VanGemeren)

ii. **His years as many generations:** "Thus he speaks, partly because his kingdom was not like Saul's, a matter of one age, expiring with his life, but established to him and his heirs for ever; and partly because Christ, his Son and Heir, should actually and in his own person possess the kingdom for ever." (Poole)

c. **He shall abide before God forever:** David could only say this in reference to himself in a very limited way. He could say it without limitation of the Messiah that was promised to come from his lineage (2Sa 7:11-16).

i. **He shall abide before God forever:** "Literally, 'He shall sit for ever before the faces of God.' He shall ever appear in the presence of God for us." (Clarke)

ii. "The psalm is...[so] Messianic that the everlasting kingdom of the Christ alone fulfils its prayer." (Maclaren)

iii. "The promises of the Lord have found their focus in the messiahship of Jesus the Christ, whose rule is established by the promise and reward of the Father (Eph 4:7-13)." (VanGemeren)

d. **Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him:** David himself needed this **mercy and truth**, but he also knew that his Greater Son, the promised Messiah, would also rely upon God's **mercy and truth**.

i. "Let these two (thy mercy and thy truth) be the supporters of his throne, let them be of his lifeguard, let them be his due and prepared portion." (Trapp)

ii. "As men cry, '*Long live the king,*' so we hail with acclamation our enthroned Immanuel, and cry, '*Let mercy and truth preserve him.*' Eternal love and immutable faithfulness are the bodyguards of Jesus' throne." (Spurgeon)

2. (8) *Praising God forever.*

**So I will sing praise to Your name forever,
That I may daily perform my vows.**

a. **So I will sing praise to Your name forever:** David began the psalm desperately crying out to God with a heart that was fainting and overwhelmed. The song ends with praise, honoring the character of God as expressed in His **name**, and doing so **forever**.

b. **That I may daily perform my vows:** David knew he had an unending obligation to thank and honor God. It could and should be done

daily and that **forever**.

i. "God daily performs his promises, let us daily perform our vows; he keeps his covenant, let us not forget ours." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Forever...daily:** "Here the word *ever* carries the mind illimitably forward, while *day after day* directs it first to what lies immediately ahead." (Kidner)

My Soul Waits for God Alone

Psa 62:1 I wait patiently for God to save me; I depend on him alone.

Psa 62:2 He alone protects and saves me; he is my defender, and I shall never be defeated.

Psa 62:3 How much longer will all of you attack someone who is no stronger than a broken-down fence?

Psa 62:4 You only want to bring him down from his place of honor; you take pleasure in lies. You speak words of blessing, but in your heart you curse him.

Psa 62:5 I depend on God alone; I put my hope in him.

Psa 62:6 He alone protects and saves me; he is my defender, and I shall never be defeated.

Psa 62:7 My salvation and honor depend on God; he is my strong protector; he is my shelter.

Psa 62:8 Trust in God at all times, my people. Tell him all your troubles, for he is our refuge.

Psa 62:9 Human beings are all like a puff of breath; great and small alike are worthless. Put them on the scales, and they weigh nothing; they are lighter than a mere breath.

Psa 62:10 Don't put your trust in violence; don't hope to gain anything by robbery; even if your riches increase, don't depend on them.

Psa 62:11 More than once I have heard God say that power belongs to him

Psa 62:12 and that his love is constant. You yourself, O Lord, reward everyone according to their deeds.

Psalms 62:1-12

Psalms 62 – My Only Rock, My Only Salvation

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.***

The Chief Musician *is thought by some to be the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of*

choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6).

Jeduthun (mentioned also in the titles of Psalms 39, 77) was one of the musicians appointed by David to lead Israel's public worship (1Ch 16:41; 1Ch 25:1-3). Charles Spurgeon wrote regarding Jeduthun: "The sons of Jeduthun were porters or doorkeepers, according to 1Ch 16:42. Those who serve well make the best of singers, and those who occupy the highest posts in the choir must not be ashamed to wait at the posts of the doors of the Lord's house."

A. Waiting upon God, who is my rock and defense.

1. (1-2) David's soul silently waits for God.

Truly my soul silently waits for God;

From Him comes my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation;

He is my defense;

I shall not be greatly moved.

a. **Truly my soul silently waits for God:** The emphasis in this line is of *surrendered silence* before God and God *alone*. The word **truly** is often translated *alone* or *only* and seems to have that sense here.

i. "It is hard to see this in the English text, because the Hebrew is almost untranslatable, but in the Hebrew text the word *only* or *alone* occurs five times in the first eight verses (in verses 1, 2, 4, 5, 6), and once in verse 9." (Boice) Kidner said of this Hebrew word *ak*, "It is an emphasizer, to underline a statement or to point to a contrast; its insistent repetition gives the psalm a tone of special earnestness."

ii. "The words have all been said – or perhaps no words will come – and the issue rests with Him alone."

(Kidner)

iii. "The natural mind is ever prone to *reason*, when we ought to *believe*; to be *at work*, when we ought to be *quiet*; to go our own way, when we ought steadily to walk on in God's ways." (Müller, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "This is why God keeps you waiting. All that is of self and nature must be silence; one voice after another cease to boast; one light after another be put out; until the soul is shut up to God alone." (Meyer)

b. **From Him comes my salvation:** In many psalms David began by telling his great need or describing his present crisis. Here, David began by declaring his great confidence in and trust upon God.

i. Psalms 62 seems to come from a time of trouble, yet it *asks God for nothing*. It is full of faith and trust, but has no fear, no despair, and no petition.

ii. "There is in it throughout not one single word (and this is a rare occurrence), in which the prophet expresses *fear* or *dejection*; and there is also no prayer in it, although, on other occasions, when in danger, he never omits to pray." (Amyraut, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **He only is my rock and my salvation:** David trusted in God alone for his strength and stability. The description is of a man completely focused upon God for His help, firmly resolved to look nowhere else.

i. "Because God *only* is our Rock, let us ever be silent *only* for God." (Morgan)

ii. **He is my defense:** Or, *fortress*. "The tried believer not only abides in God as in a cavernous rock; but dwells in him as Warrior in some bravely defiant tower or lordly castle." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) *David complains to his enemies and of his enemies.*

How long will you attack a man?

You shall be slain, all of you,

Like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.

They only consult to cast *him* down from his high position;

They delight in lies;

They bless with their mouth,

But they curse inwardly. Selah

a. **How long will you attack a man:** David's faith was in God alone, but he had words for his enemies. He rebuked them for their crazy persistence in attacking him, and warned them of judgment to come (**you shall be slain**).

b. **Like a leaning wall and a tottering fence:** David's image is clear enough, but there is disagreement among translators and commentators as to whom this applies. The New King James Version presents the opponents of David as the **leaning wall and a tottering fence**. Others think that David himself was the **leaning wall**, in his weakness unfairly set upon by his enemies.

i. Spurgeon gave the sense of the first: "Boastful persecutors bulge and swell with pride, but they are only as a bulging wall ready to fall in a heap; they lean forward to seize their prey, but it is only as a tottering fence inclines to the earth upon which it will soon lie at length." (Spurgeon)

ii. The English Standard Version gives the second sense: *How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence.*

c. **They only consult to cast him down:** David described his enemies as those who only think through a matter if it involves bringing down a man of God. They

were liars, especially in the sense of being two-faced (**they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly**).

3. (5-7) *David's calm confidence in God alone.*

**My soul, wait silently for God alone,
For my expectation is from Him.
He only is my rock and my salvation;
He is my defense;
I shall not be moved.
In God is my salvation and my glory;
The rock of my strength,
And my refuge, is in God.**

a. **My soul, wait silently for God alone:** In the opening lines of the psalm, David said that this was the state of his soul. Here he spoke to his **soul**, telling it to remain in that place of trust in and surrender to God. David's complete **expectation** was upon God.

i. "David now urges on himself the silence which he simply stated in verse 1." (Kidner)

ii. **For God alone:** "They trust not God *at all* who trust him not *alone*. He that stands with one foot on a rock, and another foot upon a quicksand, will sink and perish, as certainly as he that standeth with both feet upon a quicksand. David knew this, and therefore calleth earnestly upon his soul (for his business lay most within doors) to trust only upon God." (Trapp)

b. **He only is my rock and my salvation:** David assured himself by repeating the lines from Psa 62:2. It was true for David and he wanted it to *remain* true.

i. **He is my defense:** "Not my defender only, but my actual protection." (Spurgeon)

c. **I shall not be moved:** David repeated the idea from Psa 62:2, but with this small variation. In verse 2 he

wrote, *I shall not be greatly moved*. In this verse he seems to come to an even stronger position: **I shall not be moved**.

i. "There may be deep meaning in the slight omission of 'greatly' in the second refrain. Confidence has grown." (Maclaren)

d. **My refuge is in God**: The emphasis again reflects David's decision to trust in nothing or no one else. God alone is his **salvation**, his **glory**, his **rock**, his **strength**, and his **refuge**. We sense David was tempted to trust many different things, but he refused and kept his expectation in God alone.

i. "Observe how the Psalmist brands his own initials upon every name which he rejoicingly gives to his God – *my* expectation, *my* rock, *my* salvation, *my* glory, *my* strength, *my* refuge; he is not content to know that the Lord is all these things; he acts in faith towards him, and lays claim to him under every character." (Spurgeon)

B. David teaches others and teaches himself.

1. (8) *Teaching the people to trust in God.*

**Trust in Him at all times, you people;
Pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah**

a. **Trust in Him at all times, you people**: David felt what was good for him was good for others, also. As a leader of God's people he spoke wisdom to them, reminding them that God was worthy **at all times** of their **trust in Him**.

i. "The comforts which David had found, he exhorteth others to seek, in faith and prayer." (Spurgeon)

b. **Pour out your heart before Him:** God's strength and stability made David rightly think of Him as a rock. Yet God was not insensitive or unfeeling like a rock. God invites His people to **pour out** their heart – their sorrows, their joys, their trust, and their doubt, all of it – **before Him**.

i. "Pour it out as water. Not as milk, whose colour remains. Not as wine, whose savour remains. Not as honey, whose taste remains. But as water, of which, when it is poured out, nothing remains." (Le Blanc, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **God is a refuge for us:** He welcomes the poured-out heart as the cities of refuge welcomed the hunted man in ancient Israel.

2. (9-10) *Teaching the people what not to trust in.*

**Surely men of low degree are a vapor,
Men of high degree are a lie;
If they are weighed on the scales,
They are altogether *lighter* than vapor.
Do not trust in oppression,
Nor vainly hope in robbery;
If riches increase,
Do not set *your* heart on them.**

a. **Surely men of low degree are a vapor, men of high degree are a lie:** This psalm speaks much of trusting in God alone. Now David explained why it was important to *not* set trust in man. David understood that whether they are men of **low degree** or **high degree**, they are **altogether lighter than vapor**. There is no substance there worthy of trust.

i. "Common men can give no help. They are vanity, and it is folly to trust in them; for although they may be *willing*, yet they have no *ability* to help you: 'Rich

men are a lie.' They promise much, but perform nothing; they cause you to *hope*, but mock your *expectation*." (Clarke)

ii. However, it is possible that David did not intend the reader to understand a distinction between **men of low degree** and **men of high degree**; it may simply be an expression of Hebrew poetic repetition and parallelism. "The distinction of 'lowborn men' and 'the highborn' is based on the different words for 'man' in the MT [Masoretic Text]: *adam* and *ish* (62:9; cf. 49:2). But it is equally possible to treat both [parts] of 62:9 as a general reference to mankind: 'mankind is but a breath; mankind is but a lie.'" (VanGemeren)

iii. "The point, then, is not so much that we have nothing to *fear* from man (as in Psa 27:1 ff.), as that we have nothing to hope from him." (Kidner)

b. Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery: David had seen men advance through cruel or dishonest ways. He warned the people against this, understanding that the results never justify the evil used to get the results.

c. If riches increase, do not set your heart on them: As a king, David ended up being a very wealthy man, though most of his earlier years were lived in deep poverty. David knew what it was to see **riches increase**, and he knew the foolishness of setting one's **heart on them**. It's possible to hold great wealth without trusting in those riches, but it isn't easy.

i. "If they grow in an honest, providential manner, as the result of industry or commercial success, do not make much account of the circumstance; be not unduly elated, do not fix your love upon your money-bags." (Spurgeon)

ii. There are at least three ways in which one may **set** the **heart** on riches.

- To take excessive pleasure in riches, making them the source of joy for life.
- To place one's hope and security in riches.
- To grow proud and arrogant because of riches.

iii. "Whether rightly or wrongly won, they are wrongly used if they are trusted in." (Maclaren)

iv. "Riches are themselves transient things; therefore they should have but our transient thoughts." (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

v. "As we must not rest in men, so neither must we repose in money. Gain and fame are only so much foam of the sea." (Spurgeon)

vi. "1Ti 6:17 ff. may be alluding to this verse in its own careful treatment of the subject." (Kidner)

3. (11-12) *Teaching himself about God's power and mercy.*

**God has spoken once,
Twice I have heard this:
That power *belongs* to God.
Also to You, O Lord, *belongs* mercy;
For You render to each one according to his work.**

a. **God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God:** This truth was deeply ingrained in David's soul. Through repetition he understood that **power belongs to God** and to none other. This is why David was so determined to trust in God and God alone.

i. Since **power belongs to God**, David refused to look for strength anywhere else. Since **power belongs to God**, David did not long for power unto

himself. Since **power belongs to God**, David did not become arrogant as a ruler, knowing any power he held was as God's representative.

b. **Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy**: Gratefully, David understood that God's nature was much more than **power**. He also is rich in **mercy**. Just as men could and should look to God for **power**, so they should look to Him for **mercy**.

i. **Mercy** translates one of the great words of the Old Testament, *hesed*. It may perhaps be better translated as *love, lovingkindness, or loyal love*. David knew **power belongs to God**, but that God is a God of love who is loyal and good to His people.

ii. "The second attribute used to be translated 'mercy', but verse 12 makes it particularly clear that this word (*hesed*) has its basis in what is true and dependable. It is closely linked with covenant-keeping, hence the modern translations, *steadfast love* or 'true love.'" (Kidner)

iii. "David says that he has learned two lessons: that God is strong and that God is loving." (Boice)

iv. This meant that David had no expectation of mercy from man. If it came he was pleased, but he knew that ultimately this great covenant love [**mercy**] belonged to God.

v. "This tender attribute sweetens the grand thought of his power: the divine strength will not crush us, but will be used for our good; God is so full of mercy that it belongs to him, as if all the mercy in the universe came from God, and still was claimed by him as his possession." (Spurgeon)

vi. "This is the only truly worthy representation of God. Power without love is brutality, and love without

power is weakness. Power is the strong foundation of love, and love is the beauty and the crown of power.” (Perowne, cited in Boice)

vii. “The power of God is more than the strength of the adversaries; the mercy of God is equal to dealing with all the need of the failing soul.” (Morgan)

c. **For You render to each one according to his work:** We don’t normally think of this as an expression of God’s **mercy**. In some ways it sounds more like God’s *judgment*. Yet David had in mind the good man or woman whose goodness is despised by this world. The God of mercy would reward their goodness (even on a relative measure) as the world ignored or rejected it.

i. “Man neither helps us nor rewards us; God will do both.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “To all mankind, therefore, the prophet here recommendeth meditation on these two most interesting subject; the ‘power’ of God to punish sin, and his ‘mercy’ to pardon it. Fear of the former will beget desire of the later.” (Horne)

My Soul Thirsts for You

Psa 63:1 O God, you are my God, and I long for you. My whole being desires you; like a dry, worn-out, and waterless land, my soul is thirsty for you.

Psa 63:2 Let me see you in the sanctuary; let me see how mighty and glorious you are.

Psa 63:3 Your constant love is better than life itself, and so I will praise you.

Psa 63:4 I will give you thanks as long as I live; I will raise my hands to you in prayer.

Psa 63:5 My soul will feast and be satisfied, and I will sing glad songs of praise to you.

Psa 63:6 As I lie in bed, I remember you; all night long I think of you,

Psa 63:7 because you have always been my help. In the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

Psa 63:8 I cling to you, and your hand keeps me safe.

Psa 63:9 Those who are trying to kill me will go down into the world of the dead.

Psa 63:10 They will be killed in battle, and their bodies eaten by wolves.

Psa 63:11 Because God gives him victory, the king will rejoice. Those who make promises in God's name will praise him, but the mouths of liars will be shut.

Psalms 63:1-11

Psalms 63 – Love Better than Life

*The title of this psalm is, **A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.** Most commentators believe it to belong either to David's wilderness years before he came to the throne of Israel, or to his brief exile from the throne in the rebellion of Absalom. The wilderness years when hunted by King Saul are preferred, but not held with absolute certainty.*

Charles Spurgeon added a note of interest: "Chrysostom tells us that among the primitive Christians it was decreed and ordained that no day should pass without the public singing of this psalm."

A. Praise from the wilderness.

1. (1-2) David's thirst for God.

**O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land**

Where there is no water.

So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,

To see Your power and Your glory.

a. **O God, You are my God:** This may seem like senseless repetition, a tautology. It is not; David declared to *Elohim* that He was David's *El*, David's God in the most fundamental sense. In a day when pagans thought there were many gods and each nation had their own gods, David sweeps such ideas aside and proclaimed his allegiance to *Elohim*.

i. "The simplicity and boldness of *Thou art my God* is the secret of all that follows, since this relationship is the heart of the covenant, from the patriarchs to the present day (Gen 17:8 c; Heb 8:10 c).\" (Kidner)

b. **Early will I seek You:** Appreciating God as God, it is entirely reasonable to **seek** Him, and to seek Him as a priority of the day. The thirst of David's soul demanded to be satisfied **early** in the day.

i. "What first lays hold of the heart in the morning is likely to occupy the place all the day. First impressions are the most durable, because there is not a multitude of ideas to drive them out, or prevent them from being deeply fixed in the moral feeling.\" (Clarke)

ii. "The word '*early*' has not only the sense of early in the morning, but that of eagerness, immediateness. He who truly longs for God longs for him now.\" (Spurgeon)

iii. **My flesh longs for You:** "*Longeth; or, languisheth, or pineth away*. The desire of my soul after thee is so vehement and insatiable, that my very body feels the effects of it, as it commonly doth of all great passions.\" (Poole)

iv. "Most people do not even know that it is God their souls truly desire. They are seeking satisfaction in other things." (Boice)

c. **So I have looked for You in the sanctuary:** David sought God at the tabernacle as earnestly as a thirsty man looks for water **in a dry and thirsty land**. The Wilderness of Judah is largely desert, so this was a picture of longing that came easily to David's mind.

i. "There was no desert in his heart, though there was a desert around him." (Spurgeon)

ii. **In a dry and thirsty land:** "Learn from this, and do not say, 'I will get into communion with God when I feel better,' but long for communion now. It is one of the temptations of the devil to tell you not to pray when you do not feel like praying. Pray twice as much then." (Spurgeon)

d. **To see Your power and Your glory:** David sought God at the tabernacle to connect in some way with God's **power** and **glory**. Significantly, David was *not* at the tabernacle when he sang this song; he was in the Wilderness of Judah. Yet he knew that's God's **sanctuary** was not only a place, but also a spiritual concept that could be entered by faith no matter where a person was.

i. "Our misery is that we thirst so little for these sublime things, and so much for the mocking trifles of time and sense." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-6) *The greatness of God's love stirs praise.*

**Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,
My lips shall praise You.**

Thus I will bless You while I live;

I will lift up my hands in Your name.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,

**And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.
When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the *night* watches.**

a. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life:

This is the reason why David was so motivated to pursue God. The **lovingkindness** (*hesed*) of God was **better**, more meaningful to David, than **life** itself. This means that David both knew and experienced something of God's **lovingkindness** that many believers today do not know and experience.

- People regard life as natural; David regarded God's great love as natural.
- People enjoy life; David enjoyed God's great love.
- People value life; David valued God's great love.
- People will sacrifice to live; David would sacrifice for God's great love.
- People want to give life to others; David wanted to give God's great love.
- People despair without the sense of life; David despaired without the sense of God's great love.

i. Life and literature are filled with people who loved someone or something more than their own life, and it could be said of them that they held love **better than life**. Yet that *is not* what David sang of here. David meant that the *love of God to him* was more precious than his own life.

ii. "Now you know at what a high rate men value their lives; they will bleed, sweat, vomit, purge, part with an estate, yea, with a limb, yea, limbs, to preserve their lives.... Now, though life be so dear and precious to a man, yet a deserted soul prizes the returnings of

divine favour upon him above life, yea, above many lives." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "To dwell with God is better than life at its best; life at ease, in a palace, in health, in honour, in wealth, in pleasure; yea, a thousand lives are not equal to the eternal life which abides in Jehovah's smile." (Spurgeon)

iv. "He knew a pearl of far greater price, namely, the 'loving-kindness' of Jehovah, on which is suspended not only the life which now is, but that which is to come." (Horne)

v. **Better than life:** "Many men have been weary of their lives, as is evident in Scripture and history; but no man was ever yet found that was weary of the love and favour of God." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **My lips shall praise You:** In light of David's experience of God's great love, he determined to vocally praise God. David thought that he would be ungrateful and rude to not praise and thank the God who loved him so greatly.

i. "If we have nothing to say about God's goodness, the probable cause is our want of experience of it." (Maclaren)

ii. "May I ask a question of every professed Christian? Have you spoken with God this morning? Do you allow a day to pass without converse with God? Can it be right for us to treat the Lord with mute indifference?" (Spurgeon)

iii. Psalms 63 speaks of praise and devotion given to God in gratitude, out of a rich sense of being blessed. Spurgeon noted that we should not limit our thanks and praise to such seasons: "Even when our heart is rather desiring than enjoying we should still continue

to magnify the Most High, for his love is truly precious; even if we do not personally, for the time being, happen to be rejoicing in it. We ought not to make our praises of God to depend upon our own personal and present reception of benefits; this would be mere selfishness: even publicans and sinners have a good word for those whose hands are enriching them with gifts; it is the true believer only who will bless the Lord when he takes away his gifts or hides his face.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Thus I will bless You:** David did not mean this in the sense that a greater person bestows a blessing on a lesser. David meant this in the sense that it blessed and honored God when His creatures praised Him and thanked Him appropriately.

d. **I will lift up my hands in Your name:** The lifting of the hands was not only the common posture of prayer among the ancient Hebrews, it was especially appropriate for praise. It displayed the anticipation of gratefully receiving from God, and the sense of surrender to Him.

e. **My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness:** David spoke of a satisfaction that too few people know, even among believers. He spoke of the deep satisfaction that comes in a surrendered seeking of God, of receiving His great love, of praising God without reservation.

i. “There is in the love of God a richness, a sumptuousness, a fulness of soul-filling joy, comparable to the richest food with which the body can be nourished.” (Spurgeon)

f. **When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches:** David thought that there were not enough hours in the day to think upon God’s

greatness and goodness. Therefore he also used the **night watches** to **meditate** upon God.

i. **Night watches**: "An expression which stresses the slow progress of the hours." (Kidner)

ii. "Solitude and stillness render the 'night watches' a fit season for meditation on the so often experienced mercies of God; which, when thus called to remembrance, become a delicious repast to the spirit, filling it with all joy, and peace, and consolation." (Horne)

B. Thankful confidence in God.

1. (7-8) *Thanks for help already given.*

**Because You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.
My soul follows close behind You;
Your right hand upholds me.**

a. **Because You have been my help**: Many of David's psalms are simple cries for help. Since this psalm was composed from the Wilderness of Judah, there was certainly help David could ask for. Yet, Psalms 63 has no cry for help but gives thanks and praise for God's faithfulness in many times when God had **been my help** for David.

b. **Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice**: The idea of the shelter of **shadow** of God's wings is repeated many times in the psalms. Sometimes it has the idea of *protection*, as a mother bird shelters her young chicks. Other times it has the idea of *presence*, as in the wings of the cherubim that surround the throne of God. Here the idea of *presence* seems to best fit the context.

c. **My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me**: This speaks of the partnership and

connection the believer experiences with God. David's **soul** was close to God, following Him as one followed a Master or Teacher. God responded with care and strength for David, upholding him with His mighty

right hand (the hand of skill and strength).

i. **My soul follows close**: "Press toward the mark. Let there be no needless space between the Master and thee." (Meyer)

ii. The connection expressed by **my soul follows close** is truly close. The words translated **follows close** have the sense of joining or gluing together, as in Gen 2:24.

iii. "The primary sense of [the Hebrew word is] to glue together; from thence it signifies figuratively *to associate*, to adhere to, to be united with; and particularly to be firmly united with strong affection." (Chandler, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (9-10) *Trust despite the trouble.*

**But those *who seek my life, to destroy it,*
Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
They shall fall by the sword;
They shall be a portion for jackals.**

a. **But those who seek my life, to destroy it**: David's deep communion with God did not take away his problems. There were still those who wanted to kill him. According to its title, Psalms 63 was written from *the Wilderness of Judah* and David was in the wilderness hiding from a conspiracy to kill him.

b. **They shall fall by the sword**: David trusted God to deal with his enemies, especially with King Saul. In God's time and in God's way, David's enemies did **fall by the sword**, which has the sense of being killed in battle.

i. "He knows that the 'steadfast love' of God which he praised in verse 3, is strong with justice (*cf.* 62:12)." (Kidner)

ii. **A portion for jackals:** "If the body of a human being were to be left on the ground, the *jackals* would certainly leave but little traces of it; and in the olden times of warfare, they must have held high revelry in the battle-fields after the armies had retired. It is to this propensity of the *jackal* that David refers – himself a man of war, who had fought on many a battle-field, and must have seen the carcasses of the slain mangled by these nocturnal prowlers." (Wood, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "*Jackals* make sense here, rather than the 'foxes' of some older translations (one Hebrew word serves for both). They are the final scavengers, consuming the remains of the kill rejected by the larger beasts." (Kidner)

3. (11) *The king's confidence.*

**But the king shall rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him shall glory;
But the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.**

a. **But the king shall rejoice in God:** David was not yet on Israel's throne and that promise still waited many years for fulfillment. Yet it was a promise of God (first expressed in 1 Samuel 16), so by faith David could dare to think of himself as **the king**, and in that daring faith **rejoice in God**.

i. "*The king*; I, who am already anointed king, and who shall be actually king, when these mine enemies are fallen by the sword. He speaks of himself in the

third person, either out of modesty or out of prudence.” (Poole)

b. Everyone who swears by Him shall glory; but the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped:

The sense of **swears by Him** is to trust in God and place one’s confident love in Him; men normally take oaths upon what they hold dear. The contrast to trusting God is to **speak lies**; we resort to lies when we don’t trust God. One of these paths has a future of **glory** and the other path will **be stopped**.

i. “Two things are necessary for such triumph as this. These are indicated in the opening words of the psalm. First, there must be the consciousness of personal relationship, ‘O God, Thou art my God’; and, second, there must be earnest seeking after God: ‘Early will I seek Thee.’ Relationship must be established. Fellowship must be cultivated.” (Morgan)

Hide Me from the Wicked

Psa 64:1 I am in trouble, God—listen to my prayer! I am afraid of my enemies—save my life!

Psa 64:2 Protect me from the plots of the wicked, from mobs of evil people.

Psa 64:3 They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim cruel words like arrows.

Psa 64:4 They are quick to spread their shameless lies; they destroy good people with cowardly slander.

Psa 64:5 They encourage each other in their evil plots; they talk about where they will place their traps. "No one can see them," they say.

Psa 64:6 They make evil plans and say, "We have planned a perfect crime." The human heart and mind are a mystery.

Psa 64:7 But God shoots his arrows at them, and suddenly they are wounded.

Psa 64:8 He will destroy them because of those words; all who see them will shake their heads.

Psa 64:9 They will all be afraid; they will think about what God has done and tell about his deeds.

Psa 64:10 All righteous people will rejoice because of what the LORD has done. They will find safety in him; all good people will praise him.

Psalms 64:1-10

Psalms 64 – Secret Plots and Sudden Shots

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** As with many of David's psalms, it concerns a crisis that made him cry out to God. It is impossible to connect this psalm to a specific event in David's life with certainty.*

A. The wicked attack.

1. (1-4) Word weapons of the wicked.

**Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation;
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity,
Who sharpen their tongue like a sword,
And bend *their bows to shoot their arrows—bitter words,*
That they may shoot in secret at the blameless;
Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear.**

a. **Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation:** This is an interesting turn of phrase. Either David meant that his meditation was vocal so that God could hear his voice, or that God would hear the silent expression of his heart as his voice. Either way, as with many times in the psalms, David cried out to God for help.

i. "He can but pray, but he can pray; and no man is helpless who can look up. However high and closely engirdling may be the walls that men or sorrows build around us, there is always an opening in the dungeon roof, through which heaven is visible and prayers can mount." (Maclaren)

b. **Preserve my life from fear of the enemy:** The word **fear** is commonly translated *dread* and speaks of something greater than the normal fear of battle. David knew how crippling this kind of *dread* could be and prayed to be kept from it.

i. "In the second line, note the word *dread*, which is paralyzing, whereas fear can be sobering and healthy." (Kidner)

ii. "Every sentence reveals the relentless fury and remorseless subtlety and cruelty of the foes by whom he was surrounded. Conscious of all this he had one fear, and that was that he should be afraid of them." (Morgan)

iii. "We need to pray as the psalmist does, not so much for the deliverance from enemies as for deliverance from fear of them." (Morgan)

c. **Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked:** David knew there were dangerous enemies plotting his destruction. He felt powerless to make them stop, so he prayed. The New International Version gives a good sense of this in translating, *Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked*.

i. "This is the singer's distress. The warfare is unequal. His foes are not out in the open, but under cover." (Morgan)

ii. "Their methods cannot afford to be those of honest opposition ('the open statement of the truth',

2Co 4:2; cf. 'I opposed him to his face', Gal 2:11)."
(Kidner)

d. **Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows – bitter words:** The **secret plots** against David consisted in words and lies against him, all pushing toward his destruction and death. This was not a case of words merely hurting; this was an active conspiracy to kill.

i. "In the context of this war of lies and innuendo, the *ambush* will be either the prepared situation which 'frames' an innocent man, or the shelter of anonymity from which a rumour can be launched *without fear*."
(Kidner)

ii. "An open liar is an angel compared with this demon. Vipers and cobras are harmless and amiable creatures compared with such a reptile. The devil himself might blush at being the father of so base an offspring." (Spurgeon)

e. **Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear:** David knew that his enemies fired their **bitter words** as arrows against him, and when they did, it didn't bother them in the least. They did not fear either David or God.

i. Psalms 64 emphasizes the devious nature of David's enemies. They use **secret plots**. They **shoot in secret**. They attack **suddenly**. Especially because David mentions an attack by **arrows** from a hidden or **secret** position, his enemies act like the ancient version of snipers.

ii. "The key word in Psalms 64 is *suddenly*, meaning 'unexpectedly' or 'without warning.'" (Boice)

iii. David knew how dangerous it was in battle if a hidden archer worked as a sniper. If he could see and confront his enemy one-on-one, a warrior such as

David liked his chances. The hidden sniper was of great concern, to be put down by an arrow he never saw coming.

iv. David's enemies didn't use literal arrows, but they attacked him secretly, anonymously, without the courage to say things to his face. They shot at him like a sniper shoots at a man who has no way to defend himself.

2. (5-6) The secret plotting of an evil matter.

They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter;

They talk of laying snares secretly;

They say, "Who will see them?"

They devise iniquities:

"We have perfected a shrewd scheme."

Both the inward thought and the heart of man are deep.

a. **They encourage themselves in an evil matter:** It would be bad enough that an individual purposed this against David, but it was worse than that. Many people had conspired against him, planning secret traps and **snares**, unafraid before God or man (**Who will see them?**).

i. "They foolishly believe that they are not accountable to anyone, as is expressed by their confident question." (VanGemeren)

ii. **They encourage themselves:** "Good men are frequently discouraged, and not unfrequently discourage one another, but the children of darkness are wise in their generation and keep their spirits up, and each one has a cheering word to say to his fellow villain." (Spurgeon)

b. **We have perfected a shrewd scheme:** They were proud in their evil plotting. They boasted of their sins,

showing the dark depth of their **thought** and **heart**.

i. **They devise iniquities:** "They search the devil's skull for new inventions; who is ready enough to lend them his seven heads to plot and his ten horns to push at good people." (Trapp)

ii. **The inward thought and heart of man are deep:** "The Hebrew literally speaks of men's hearts as being 'deep,' the idea being that they are almost bottomless in their supply of evil deeds and cunning." (Boice)

B. God responds.

1. (7-9) God answers back with His own arrow.

But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow;

Suddenly they shall be wounded.

So He will make them stumble over their own tongue;

All who see them shall flee away.

All men shall fear,

And shall declare the work of God;

For they shall wisely consider His doing.

a. **But God shall shoot at them with an arrow:** The evil men opposing David acted as if they had all the arrows, but David knew that God was his defense, and God was well-armed. God had an arrow of His own, and **suddenly they shall be wounded.**

i. David's enemies shot at him like snipers, from hidden and high positions. David's friend was **God**, in a higher and more hidden position. They shot their poisonous words at David unexpectedly, without warning [*suddenly*, Psa 64:4]. God would shoot back at them unexpectedly, without warning – **suddenly**. God had them in His sights.

ii. **Suddenly they shall be wounded** reminds us that often the judgment of God comes upon the

wicked unexpectedly, without any warning. They think everything is fine until they are **wounded**.

iii. "The brevity of God's countermeasures, after the elaborate scheming of the wicked, tells its own decisive tale." (Kidner)

b. He will make them stumble over their own tongue: They used their lies and slanders to attack David, but God would find a way to make their own words their ruin. They would trip in the very way they hoped to trap David.

c. All men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God: David was confident that God would use His dealings against these wicked men as a lesson to others. When they saw the evil plotters wounded by God, they would learn.

i. Previously the wicked asked, "Who will see them?" (Psa 64:5). The answer is, *everyone will see them*, because God will use them to teach a lesson to **all men**.

ii. *When Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* (Isa 26:9 b)

iii. "Those who might have been bold in sin shall be made to tremble and to stand in awe of the righteous Judge." (Spurgeon)

2. (10) Resolution for the righteous.

The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and trust in Him.

And all the upright in heart shall glory.

a. **The righteous shall be glad in the LORD:** God's dealing with the wicked would be a lesson to all men, but it would be special joy to the righteous. They had special

reason to **be glad** that God was vindicated and His servant was protected.

i. "As sorrow, sooner or later, will be the portion of Messiah's enemies, so joy is the high privilege of his friends and disciples." (Horne)

b. **And trust in Him:** It would not only bring joy, but also increase faith. God's faithful answer to prayer would demonstrate that He is worthy of **trust**, and build the faith of the **righteous**.

i. "Their observation of providence shall increase their faith; since he who fulfils his threatenings will not forget his promises." (Spurgeon)

ii. "So the answer of verse 1, to be preserved from panic, is more than answered. The judgment is still future, but joy can break out already. It is a sober joy, with the facts faced at their worst, but also at their overwhelming best." (Kidner)

O God of Our Salvation

Psa 65:1 O God, it is right for us to praise you in Zion and keep our promises to you,

Psa 65:2 because you answer prayers. People everywhere will come to you

Psa 65:3 on account of their sins. Our faults defeat us, but you forgive them.

Psa 65:4 Happy are those whom you choose, whom you bring to live in your sanctuary. We shall be satisfied with the good things of your house, the blessings of your sacred Temple.

Psa 65:5 You answer us by giving us victory, and you do wonderful things to save us. People all over the world and across the distant seas trust in you.

Psa 65:6 You set the mountains in place by your strength, showing your mighty power.

Psa 65:7 You calm the roar of the seas and the noise of the waves; you calm the uproar of the peoples.

Psa 65:8 The whole world stands in awe of the great things that you have done. Your deeds bring shouts of joy from one end of the earth to the other.

Psa 65:9 You show your care for the land by sending rain; you make it rich and fertile. You fill the streams with water; you provide the earth with crops. This is how you do it:

Psa 65:10 you send abundant rain on the plowed fields and soak them with water; you soften the soil with showers and cause the young plants to grow.

Psa 65:11 What a rich harvest your goodness provides! Wherever you go there is plenty.

Psa 65:12 The pastures are filled with flocks; the hillsides are full of joy.

Psa 65:13 The fields are covered with sheep; the valleys are full of wheat. Everything shouts and sings for joy.

Psalms 65:1-13

Psalms 65 – At the Temple, In the Earth

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song.** Charles Spurgeon observed this about the uncommon pairing of **Psalm** and **Song** for this composition: "The Hebrew calls it a Shur and Mizmor, a combination of psalm and song, which may be best described by the term, 'A Lyrical Poem.' In this case the psalm may be said or sung, and be equally suitable."*

We don't know the occasion of this psalm, but because of its thankfulness and praise connected to flocks and grain, many think it was composed for a harvest festival, perhaps the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall season.

A. God in His temple.

1. (1-3) Why praise waits for God in Jerusalem.

**Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion;
And to You the vow shall be performed.
O You who hear prayer,
To You all flesh will come.
Iniquities prevail against me;
As for our transgressions,
You will provide atonement for them.**

a. **Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion:** The psalmist David described a wonderful picture, the idea that **praise** was waiting to be given unto God in Jerusalem. The sense is that when God came to meet His people, He would be received in an atmosphere of praise.

i. "The word translated 'waiteth' [**awaiting**] comes from a root meaning to be silent.... This does not mean that there is no praise, but on the contrary that praise is so complete that at first it can find no utterance." (Morgan)

ii. "Literally, 'Praise is silence for thee'.... It may sometimes be the height of worship, in other words, to fall silent before God in awe at His presence and in submission to His will." (Kidner)

iii. "Certainly, when the soul is most filled with adoring awe, she is least content with her own expressions, and feels most deeply how inadequate are all mortal songs to proclaim the divine goodness." (Spurgeon)

b. **To You the vow shall be performed:** God's people would gather together in Jerusalem to thank God for answering their prayers and to give sacrifices and praise in fulfillment of vows made.

i. Believers should take seriously their vows before God. In addition to vows and promises made to God,

our baptism is itself a vow to God. Our association with God's people is a vow. These should be regarded with a solemn and serious dependence upon God.

ii. "A vow unkept will burn the conscience like a hot iron. Vows of service, of donation, of praise, or whatever they may be, are no trifles; and in the day of grateful praise they should, without fail, be fulfilled to the utmost of our power." (Spurgeon)

iii. At Mount Zion the Son of David fulfilled the greatest vow, coming to completely do the will of God (Psa 40:6-8) and giving His life as a sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the world.

c. **O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come:** Praise awaits and vows are performed because God hears and answers prayer. This goodness of God draws not only Israel, but also **all flesh**. This starts a thought that will be developed later in the psalm.

d. **Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them:** This shows a proper understanding of the sacrificial system in God's greater plan. David understood his personal struggle against sin, and how he sometimes failed in that struggle. He also understood that God's answer for **transgressions** is an atoning sacrifice that *God* provides.

i. David was humble enough to say, **iniquities prevail against me**. "No man was ever rejected by God for his confessed badness, as sundry have been for their supposed goodness." (Trapp)

ii. **Iniquities prevail against me:** "Our sins would, but for grace, prevail against us in the court of divine justice, in the court of conscience, and in the battle of life." (Spurgeon)

iii. David believed in the system of animal sacrifice established by the Law of Moses, but he also looked beyond that system to a perfect sacrifice that God Himself would provide. In this David looked to the Messiah and His perfect, atoning work on the cross fulfilling the promise, **You will provide atonement for them.**

2. (4) *The goodness of God's house.*

**Blessed is the man You choose,
And cause to approach You,
That he may dwell in Your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,
Of Your holy temple.**

a. **Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You:** In the connection between God and man, David knew that God was the cause of the connection. The connection begins when God chooses and then causes a man or a woman to come to Him, **that he may dwell in Your courts.**

i. Some think that the chosen man in David's mind is the priest. Yet he mentions the part of the house of God where all were welcome, the **courts**. "He mentioneth courts, because the people were permitted to go no further into God's house." (Poole)

ii. If there is a priest in view, then prophetically we can apply this in an ultimate sense to Jesus, our Great High Priest. "Blessed, above all blessing and praise, is the man Christ Jesus, elect, precious, chosen of God to be a high priest for ever." (Horne)

b. **We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house:** Once established and enjoyed, the connection between God and man brings satisfaction to men. They

experienced God's house as a place of **goodness** received.

i. **The goodness of Your house** gives the image of God as a host for His people. "It happily dwells a guest in the house and is supplied with that which satisfies all desires. The guest's security in the house of his host, his right to protection, help, and food, are, as usual, implied in the imagery." (Maclaren)

B. God in His creation.

1. (5-8) *The far-reaching greatness of God.*

**By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us,
O God of our salvation,
You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth,
And of the far-off seas;
Who established the mountains by His strength,
Being clothed with power;
You who still the noise of the seas,
The noise of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples.
They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs;
You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice.**

a. **By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation:** This was an ongoing confidence in the continuation of God's goodness. God had answered prayer and provided atonement; David expected such **awesome deeds** in the future also.

b. **You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth:** David again lifted his vision from beyond Israel to

the ends of the earth, to the far-off seas. He understood that though Israel belonged to God in a special sense, He was and is the God of the whole earth.

c. **You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples:** God's might is shown in His ability to quiet not only the oceans but also the noise of the peoples of the world. His authority extended far beyond Israel, to **the farthest parts** of the earth.

i. Stormy and noisy seas put forth enormous energy. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), an average hurricane releases energy equivalent to 6×10^{14} watts of electricity. This is 200 times world-wide electrical generating capacity. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) says that in its lifetime an average hurricane can release as much energy as 10,000 nuclear bombs. Yet God can and does **still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves.**

ii. Knowing this great power of God should build our faith when we see the **tumult of the peoples** and are concerned for God's salvation to reach **the ends of the earth**. We can think of those at the **ends of the earth** as those who are farthest off, least known, least thought of, most afflicted, and the hardest to reach.

iii. "The child of God in seasons of trouble should fly at once to him who stills the seas: nothing is too hard for him." (Spurgeon)

iv. "In pagan mythology the 'sea' connoted chaotic and life-threatening powers. However, Israel knew that the Lord created everything and established his

rule over the 'roaring' seas and their waves."
(VanGemeren)

v. Established the mountains by His strength:

"Philosophers of the forget-God school are too much engrossed with their laws of upheaval to think of the Upheaver. Their theories of volcanic action and glacier action, etc., are frequently used as bolts and bars to shut the Lord out of his own world. Our poet is of another mind, and sees God's hand settling Alps and Andes on their bases, and therefore he sings in his praise." (Spurgeon)

d. You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice: The exercise of God's authority over the earth does not bring it fear and oppression; it brings rejoicing to the day.

i. Outgoings of the morning and evening: "What is pictured, then, may be either the glory of day and night (*cf.* Psa 19:1 f.; Job 38:7; Job 38:19 f.), or the whole expanse of earth from east to west, praising the Creator." (Kidner)

2. (9-13) The blessed and grateful earth.

**You visit the earth and water it,
You greatly enrich it;
The river of God is full of water;
You provide their grain,
For so You have prepared it.
You water its ridges abundantly,
You settle its furrows;
You make it soft with showers,
You bless its growth.
You crown the year with Your goodness,
And Your paths drip *with* abundance.
They drop *on* the pastures of the wilderness,
And the little hills rejoice on every side.**

**The pastures are clothed with flocks;
The valleys also are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, they also sing.**

a. **You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it:** God cares for the earth and makes sure it has what it needs. He provides rivers of **water**, and **grain** for the earth.

i. "For people in that place and day, the coming of abundant rains to water the crops was literally the blessing of life rather than death. It is hard for most of us today to fully appreciate that." (Boice)

ii. "Thou art the right Master-cultivator, who cultivates the land much more and much better than the farmer does. He does nothing more to it than break up the ground, and plough, and sow, and then lets it lie. But God must be always attending to it with rain and heat, and must do everything to make it grow and prosper while the farmer lies at home and sleeps

."

(Luther, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. The idea is clear: *the earth is barren until God acts upon it*. God is faithful to send the rain and what is necessary for the cultivation of the earth, bringing forth a wonderful harvest. So, God's people should pray and expect God to move upon both His Church and the world, knowing that they will be barren unless God acts upon them.

iv. Isa 55:10-11 speaks of this analogy between the fruitfulness of the earth and the effectiveness of God's work, especially through His Word: *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the*

sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

b. **You bless its growth:** The earth is full of living, growing things all established and blessed by God. This is another aspect of His power and care for the earth.

i. "How easy were it with God to starve us all!" (Trapp)

ii. David was only concerned for *God's work* in bringing forth grain. David wasn't a fool; he knew that man had his work to do. Yet, "This is beautiful as a description of God's part therein. Man's toil is not described. It is taken for granted, and is his prayer." (Morgan)

iii. **You crown the year with Your goodness:** "A full and *plentiful harvest* is the *crown* of the year; and this springs from the unmerited *goodness* of God. This is the *diadem* of the earth." (Clarke)

iv. **The little hills rejoice:** "Literally, *The hills gird themselves with exultation*. The metaphor appears to be taken from the frisking of lambs, bounding of kids, and dancing of shepherds and shepherdesses, in the joy-inspiring summer season." (Clarke)

c. **The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain:** David looked out over the land and saw hills covered with livestock and valleys full of grain. It seemed that creation itself shouted for joy and sang to God.

i. "It would be hard to surpass this evocative description of the fertile earth, observed with loving exactness at one moment and poetic freedom at the next, culminating in the fantasy of hills and fields

putting on their finest clothes and making merry together.” (Kidner)

ii. “The voice of nature is articulate to God; it is not only a shout, but a song.” (Spurgeon)

iii. The hills and valleys are happy and joyful before God because of His great power and care for them. David understood that the people of God have those same reasons to praise God, in addition to the even greater reasons of atonement and connection with God described earlier in the psalms.

How Awesome Are Your Deeds

Psa 66:1 Praise God with shouts of joy, all people!

Psa 66:2 Sing to the glory of his name; offer him glorious praise!

Psa 66:3 Say to God, "How wonderful are the things you do! Your power is so great that your enemies bow down in fear before you.

Psa 66:4 Everyone on earth worships you; they sing praises to you, they sing praises to your name."

Psa 66:5 Come and see what God has done, his wonderful acts among people.

Psa 66:6 He changed the sea into dry land; our ancestors crossed the river on foot. There we rejoiced because of what he did.

Psa 66:7 He rules forever by his might and keeps his eyes on the nations. Let no rebels rise against him.

Psa 66:8 Praise our God, all nations; let your praise be heard.

Psa 66:9 He has kept us alive and has not allowed us to fall.

Psa 66:10 You have put us to the test, God; as silver is purified by fire, so you have tested us.

Psa 66:11 You let us fall into a trap and placed heavy burdens on our backs.

Psa 66:12 You let our enemies trample us; we went through fire and flood, but now you have brought us to a place of safety.

Psa 66:13 I will bring burnt offerings to your house; I will offer you what I promised.

Psa 66:14 I will give you what I said I would when I was in trouble.

Psa 66:15 I will offer sheep to be burned on the altar; I will sacrifice bulls and goats, and the smoke will go up to the sky.

Psa 66:16 Come and listen, all who honor God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.

Psa 66:17 I cried to him for help; I praised him with songs.

Psa 66:18 If I had ignored my sins, the Lord would not have listened to me.

Psa 66:19 But God has indeed heard me; he has listened to my prayer.

Psa 66:20 I praise God, because he did not reject my prayer or keep back his constant love from me.

Psalms 66:1-20

Psalms 66 – How Everyone Can Praise God

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Song. A Psalm.** As with Psalms 65, it is described as both a **Song** and a **Psalm**. This is the first psalm since Psalms 50 to not be attributed to David.*

"This Psalm is said to be recited on Easter day, by the Greek church: it is described in the Greek Bible as A Psalm of the Resurrection, and may be understood to refer, in a prophetic sense, to the regeneration of the world, through

the conversion of the Gentiles.” (Daniel Cresswell, cited in Spurgeon)

A. Praising the God of all the earth.

1. (1-2) Singing to the honor of His name.

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!

Sing out the honor of His name;

Make His praise glorious.

a. **Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth:** As in the previous and the next psalm, Psalms 66 has not only Israel in view but **all the earth**. The psalmist understood that God was not only God over Israel, but the whole world. It was good and appropriate for him to call everyone to **joyfully** praise God.

i. “Composers of tunes for the congregation should see to it that their airs are cheerful; we need not so much noise, as *joyful* noise.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Make His praise glorious:** Song is not the only way to praise God, but it is one of the chief ways. The psalmist encouraged all to **sing out the honor of His name**, and to do it in a way that made God’s praise **glorious**.

i. “Praise requires concentration on the thing, person, or deity being praised. Thanks tend to be focused on what the *speaker has received*, and thus may become rather narrow and perfunctory. In the expression of thanksgiving, the self may become the primary subject, but this is much less likely to happen in praise.” (Tate, cited in Boice)

2. (3-4) How to praise God.

Say to God,

“How awesome are Your works!

Through the greatness of Your power

**Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.
All the earth shall worship You
And sing praises to You;
They shall sing praises to Your name.” Selah**

a. **Say to God:** The psalmist gives practical guidance for the those who want to praise God, telling them specifically what to **say**. He doesn't mean this in a mechanical or unfeeling way, but as help to the hearts that truly want to praise God but needs some instruction as to *how*. It begins with what we **say to God**, words that we actually speak. There is a place for unspoken praise (Psa 65:1) but spoken praise must not be neglected.

i. **Say to God:** “There was more required than to think of God. Consideration, meditation, speculation, contemplation upon God and divine objects, have their place and their season; but this is more than that, and more than admiration.” (John Donne, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **How awesome are Your works:** One may begin to praise God by thinking upon the greatness of His work in creation, salvation, and restoration. Then, by telling God **how awesome** His **works** are.

c. **Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You:** Praise may continue in the recognition of the great **power** of God, which brought forth the **awesome** works. This awesome and powerful God has **enemies**, but through His great power they will be conquered and brought to **submit themselves** to God. This praises God for the triumph of His power over all His **enemies**.

i. Several commentators note that the sense of **shall submit themselves to You** has the feel of an insincere, unwilling submission to God. “The Hebrew

clearly intimates, it will be a forced and false submission. Power brings a man to his knee, but love alone wins his heart. Pharaoh said he would let Israel go, but he lied unto God; he submitted in word but not in deed. Tens of thousands, both in earth and hell, are rendering this constrained homage to the Almighty; they *only* submit because they cannot do otherwise; it is not their loyalty, but his power, which keeps them subjects of his boundless dominion.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “True, he discerns that submission will not always be genuine; for he uses the same word to express it as occurs in Psa 18:44, which represents ‘feigned homage.’” (Maclaren)

iii. Php 2:10-11 has something of this sense: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

d. **All the earth shall worship You:** God may be praised in the recognition of His ultimate triumph over **all the earth** and in His worthiness to receive the **worship** and **praises** they rightly bring to Him.

e. **They shall sing praises to Your name:** In the thinking of the ancient Jews, the **name** was more than a word; it was a true identifier, an indication of character. This speaks of something greater than the grudging submission of the previous lines; this is praise that knows something of the nature and character of God.

i. “Acceptable worship not only praises God as the mysterious Lord, but it is rendered fragrant by some measure of knowledge of his name or character. God would not be worshipped as an unknown God, nor

have it said of his people, 'Ye worship ye know not what.'" (Spurgeon)

ii. **Selah**: "A little pause, for holy expectation is well inserted after so great a prophecy, and the uplifting of the heart is also a seasonable direction. No meditation can be more joyous than that excited by the prospect of a world reconciled to its Creator." (Spurgeon)

B. Praising the God of Israel.

1. (5-7) Seeing the works of God that make Him worthy of praise.

**Come and see the works of God;
He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men.
He turned the sea into dry land;
They went through the river on foot.
There we will rejoice in Him.
He rules by His power forever;
His eyes observe the nations;
Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah**

a. **Come and see the works of God**: The psalmist felt that perhaps others might be slow to think of God's awesome works (Psa 66:3). He would help, describing how **He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men**.

i. **Come and see**: "He taketh good people by the hand, as it were, leading them to the sight of God's stupendous proceedings." (Trapp)

b. **He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the river on foot**: The psalmist turned to the holy history of the Scriptures and remembered how God showed His power in bringing Israel through the Red Sea (Exo 14:21) and through the Jordan River (Jos 3:14-16).

i. The psalmist could have picked anything to describe the **works** of God, but chose two events that showed how God participates in human affairs. The God of all power is not a passive observer, but an active participant.

c. **There we will rejoice in Him:** In saying **we**, the psalmist identifies himself with Israel hundreds of years before his time, as if he were there. It was as if the psalmist stood beside the Jordan River, pointed to a spot and said, "**There**. That is where this happened. It wasn't a legend or a myth, but there is a **there** where it happened. Therefore **we will rejoice in Him.**"

i. "God's work is never antiquated. It is all a revelation of eternal activities. What He has been, He is. What He did, He does. Therefore faith may feed on all the records of old time, and expect the repetition of all that they contain." (Maclaren)

ii. **Rejoice in Him:** "It is to be remarked that Israel's joy was in her God, and there let ours be. It is not so much what he has done, as what he is, that should excite in us a sacred rejoicing." (Spurgeon)

d. **His eyes observe the nations:** The psalmist called all the earth to observe the great works of God and give Him praise. It was also worth remembering that He observes **the nations**; they should look up to the One who looks at them.

e. **Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves:** In light of God's power, His participation in human affairs, and His eye upon the world, to be **rebellious** against Him is foolish. To **exalt** yourself against Him is madness.

2. (8-12) *More reasons to praise God.*

Oh, bless our God, you peoples!

And make the voice of His praise to be heard,

**Who keeps our soul among the living,
And does not allow our feet to be moved.
For You, O God, have tested us;
You have refined us as silver is refined.
You brought us into the net;
You laid affliction on our backs.
You have caused men to ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water;
But You brought us out to rich *fulfillment*.**

a. **Oh, bless our God, you peoples:** The psalmist repeated his exhortation to all the earth, telling them to praise the God of Israel. He will give many more reasons to do so.

i. "Verse 8 reveals the conviction that Israel's fortunes embrace the world, as Abram was promised that they should." (Kidner)

ii. "We must not only publish God's praises, but provoke others also so to do." (Trapp)

b. **Who keeps our soul among the living:** God preserves His people, giving them life and secure position (**does not allow our feet to be moved**).

i. "Try us, O God; but enable us to stand the trial!" (Horne)

ii. "If God has enabled us not only to keep our life, but our position, we are bound to give him double praise. Living and standing is the saint's condition through divine grace. Immortal and immovable are those whom God preserves." (Spurgeon)

c. **For You, O God, have tested us:** God blesses His people, but sometimes the blessing is in a difficult testing. The psalmist praised God for life and secure position, but also recognized the hardships of life. He

expressed the hardships and testing with many word pictures.

- **You have refined us as silver is refined:** We feel the heat rising until we have no strength and stability but are melted. The impure dross rises to the top and God, the Refiner expertly scrapes it away, knowing that the silver was pure enough when He can see His own reflection in our melted metal.

- **You have brought us into the net:** We felt the freedom of being able to swim wherever we pleased, and life was full of options and choices. Suddenly, that freedom seemed gone and our choices became few.

- **You laid affliction on our backs:** We used to walk easy and carefree, as if we did not have a single burden. Now our

backs are loaded with **affliction**, and we find the weight difficult to bear.

- **You have caused men to ride over our heads:** We used to stand in battle and fight on equal footing with our enemies, if not better footing. Then we were cast down and felt them riding in triumph over us. Where once we seemed to only know victory, now we feel the sting of defeat.

- **We went through fire and through water:** We feel that we have been through it all, and it seems that no adversity has been kept from us.

- i. "The word translated *affliction* is unknown elsewhere, and its meaning uncertain; but it may derive from a root meaning 'to press,' an idea familiar with us in our modern metaphorical use of the word 'pressure.'" (Kidner)

- ii. "*To ride over our heads*; to ride upon our shoulders. By thy permission they have used us like

slaves, yea, like beasts, to carry their persons or burdens. Compare Isa 51:23." (Poole)

d. **But You brought us out to rich fulfillment:** The psalmist said to God that he understood, that in some ultimate sense, their affliction was "from **You**" – it was allowed by God Himself. As they continued to trust in God, He vindicated Himself and their trust, not only delivering them from difficulty, but bringing them **out to rich fulfillment**. This **rich fulfillment** would never have come apart from the many difficulties.

i. "The main end of our life is not to do, but to become. For this we are being moulded and disciplined each hour." (Meyer)

ii. We remind ourselves that this is in a list giving all the earth reasons why God should be praised. We would think that such difficulties should be avoided if we want others to praise God, but the psalmist described life lived for God as it really is – and knew that understanding God as He really is will draw men and women to praise.

C. Praising the God of the individual believer.

1. (13-15) Praising God with sacrifices and the paying of VOWS.

**I will go into Your house with burnt offerings;
I will pay You my vows,
Which my lips have uttered
And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble.
I will offer You burnt sacrifices of fat animals,
With the sweet aroma of rams;
I will offer bulls with goats. Selah**

a. **I will go into Your house with burnt offerings:**
The psalmist determined to praise God by obeying His

command regarding sacrifices, bringing them to the altar of God.

i. "By its very nature a burnt offering was more serious, signifying something like the complete dedication or consecration of himself to God by the worshipper." (Boice)

b. **I will pay You my vows:** The psalmist had promised God certain sacrifices or gifts in gratitude for God's work when he **was in trouble**. He would not sin by failing to bring these.

i. **My vows:** "Only let us never forget that when made, they must be fulfilled. The reason is not in God, but in us. To fail to keep faith with God is to suffer deterioration of character." (Morgan)

c. **Burnt sacrifices of fat animals, with sweet aroma of rams; I will offer bulls with goats:** The psalmist would fulfill his vows to God with generous, expensive sacrifices, offering multiple animals. What he brought to God was of the best; they were **fat animals**.

i. "The qualifying animals the psalmist makes mention of are rams, bulls, and goats. The largess of the vow is unusual." (VanGemeren)

2. (16-19) Praising God with words.

**Come and hear, all you who fear God,
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.
I cried to Him with my mouth,
And He was extolled with my tongue.
If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.
But certainly God has heard me;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.**

a. **Come and hear, all you who fear God:** The vow of the psalmist was not fulfilled through sacrifice alone. He

also had an obligation to proclaim God's goodness, to **declare what He has done for my soul**. His actions spoke, but did not take away the need for his mouth to also speak.

i. "We may picture the scene of public worship, perhaps at Passover or at a victory celebration, in which the corporate praise gives way to the voice of this single worshipper, who stands with his gifts before the altar, and speaks of the God whose care is not only world- and nation-wide, but personal: *I will tell what he has done for me.*" (Kidner)

b. **I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue**: As the psalmist spoke to others about God's goodness, he described how he spoke to God. He offered both the sacrifice of animals and the sacrifice of praise.

c. **If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear**: No one should think that God could be persuaded merely through sacrifices or vows. It was important to make clear that the psalmist did not only sacrifice but also gave God the better: obedience. He did not hold on to **iniquity** in his **heart**.

i. "*Iniquity*; any sin whatsoever, and especially idolatry, which is oft expressed by this word, to which the Israelites were very prone, and to which they had most powerful temptations." (Poole)

ii. "The prayer which is 'heard,' is the prayer of the penitent, heartily grieved and wearied with sin, hating and longing to be delivered from it." (Horne)

d. **Certainly God has heard me**: When he cried out to God, God heard. He answered, giving more reasons to praise Him.

3. (20) *The conclusion of praise.*

**Blessed be God,
Who has not turned away my prayer,
Nor His mercy from me!**

a. **Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer:** We often take the privilege of prayer for granted. The psalmist understood how wonderful it was that God received his prayer, and how it made God more to be praised.

b. **Nor His mercy from me:** This was a final and wonderful reminder that the answer to prayer did not come from what the psalmist deserved, but as a gift from the great love and mercy [*hesed*] of God.

i. "The final word of gratitude is not for the answered request alone, but for what it signifies: an unbroken relationship with God." (Kidner)

ii. Thomas Fuller (cited by Spurgeon) composed a syllogism from Psa 66:19-20. It works something like this:

- If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer.
- God has heard my prayer.

We would expect the next line to be, *Therefore, there is no iniquity in my heart*. Yet the psalmist completed the syllogism in an unexpected way, praising the **mercy** of God. "I looked that he should have clapped the crown on his own, and he puts it on God's head. I will learn this excellent logic." (Fuller)

iii. "This is the conclusion of David's syllogism, in this and the two former verses; and herein his logic is better than Aristotle's." (Trapp)

Make Your Face Shine upon Us

Psa 67:1 God, be merciful to us and bless us; look on us with kindness,

Psa 67:2 so that the whole world may know your will; so that all nations may know your salvation.

Psa 67:3 May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you!

Psa 67:4 May the nations be glad and sing for joy, because you judge the peoples with justice and guide every nation on earth.

Psa 67:5 May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you!

Psa 67:6 The land has produced its harvest; God, our God, has blessed us.

Psa 67:7 God has blessed us; may all people everywhere honor him.

Psalms 67:1-7

Psalms 67 – A Missionary Psalm

*The title tells us the audience of the psalm: **To the Chief Musician. On Stringed Instruments. A Psalm. A Song.** Some believe that **the Chief Musician** is the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6).*

This wonderful psalm is sometimes forgotten or neglected when God's people think of their favorite psalms. Though Martin Luther wrote five large volumes of exposition on Psalms, he skipped Psalms 67 entirely. Nevertheless, this psalm has a heart to see God's way, God's salvation, and God's praise extended through all the earth.

A. A request and reason for blessing.

1. (1) A request for blessing.

**God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us. Selah**

a. **God be merciful to us and bless us:** These words come from the Aaronic Blessing of Num 6:24-26, where the High Priest of Israel would pronounce this beautiful blessing upon the people.

i. Paul wrote in Rom 15:16 : *That I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* This was priestly language, and we might say that Paul saw himself as a priest. He did his priestly service through *evangelism*, not animal sacrifice. 1Pe 2:9-10 tells us that all believers are also a priesthood. We offer a priestly service to the world, and we primarily do it through evangelism.

b. **God be merciful to us:** The psalmist first knew his need for mercy. This sets our heart in the right frame of mind: sinners who need the mercy of God. One may need more mercy than another, but we all need mercy.

i. "The best saints and the worst sinners may unite in this petition." (Spurgeon)

c. **And bless us:** Beyond the mercy of God – which He could show simply by leaving us alone, by *not* destroying us – we want God to **bless us** also. It would be quite a sight to see a guilty criminal before a judge, pleading for mercy, and receiving it – and then asking for a *blessing*! But God's love toward us is that great.

d. **And cause His face to shine upon us:** To have the glorious, happy face of God shining upon us is the greatest gift we could have. To know that as God looks upon you, He is well pleased – not because of who you are, or what you have done, but because you are in

Jesus Christ – there is no greater source of peace and power in life.

- i. “An [Middle Eastern] monarch revealed in his facial expression either his pleasure or displeasure with the party that sought an audience with him.” (VanGemeren)
- ii. “A shining face is the opposite of an angry or scowling face, and a face turned toward someone is the opposite of a face turned away in indifference or disgust. A shining face implies favor...and it implies the friendliness of warm personal relationships too.” (Boice)
- iii. “Why should he fret when God smiles? What matters though all the world should censure, if Jehovah countenances his servant. A look of approval from God creates a deep, delightful calm within the soul.” (Spurgeon)
- e. **Selah:** The idea in the Hebrew for this word (occurring 74 times in the Old Testament) is for a *pause*. Most people think it speaks of a reflective pause, a pause to meditate on the words just spoken. It may also be a musical instruction, for a musical interlude of some kind.
 - i. Think about the greatness of:
 - God’s mercy.
 - God’s blessing.
 - The approval of God’s shining face.
 - ii. “These three petitions include all that we need here or hereafter.” (Spurgeon)

2. (2) The reason for blessing.

**That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.**

a. **That Your way may be known on earth:** The reason the psalmist asked for this high and great blessing wasn't a selfish reason. He asked for this blessing for the sake of God's glory *and* for the sake of the perishing multitudes.

i. When people see the work of God in the lives of His people – His blessing active upon them – it is one way God makes His way **known on earth**. When it seems that God is silent or dead in the lives of His people, it is a great hindrance to making His way **known on earth**.

ii. "It may be said without fear of contradiction that the greatest hindrance to evangelism in the world today is the failure of the church to supply evidence in her own life and work of the saving power of God." (Stott, cited in Boice)

b. **Your way:** Not simply the truth of God or the word of God to be published abroad – but for **Your way**; the **way** of the Lord, to **be known on earth**.

i. This reminds us of the idea behind the great missionary passage of Mat 28:19-20 : *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*. Jesus didn't tell them only to evangelize and save souls, but to *make disciples of all the nations*, and to teach them *to observe all things that I have commanded you*.

ii. Of course, we need to *know* God's word to walk in His **way**; but walking in His **way** is more than knowing His Word.

c. **May be known on earth:** The psalmist had a beautiful *scope* in mind: not just Jerusalem, not just Judea, not just all of Israel, not just all the Middle East, not just all the Mediterranean world, not just his continent or hemisphere, but all the **earth**.

i. God wants us to have the *same heart* and the *same vision* – for all the **earth**.

d. **Your salvation among all nations:** Of all of the ways of God, this is the most precious and needful. We should see a perishing world and long for God's **salvation among all nations**.

i. Again, this is the *reason* for blessing. Are you a member of the "bless me" club, always crying out to God, "Bless me, bless me, bless me"? But your cry is essentially a selfish one, the kind of cry a self-interested child makes. Yes, we unashamedly ask God to bless us – but not only for ourselves, but so His **way** will be made known in all the earth, and His **salvation** among all nations.

ii. "Since Pentecost Israel's ancient prayer is being fulfilled more magnificently than they could ever have imagined." (VanGemenen)

B. A call to praise God.

1. (3) *A prayer to God for all peoples.*

Let the peoples praise You, O God;

Let all the peoples praise You.

a. **Let the peoples praise You, O God:** We notice that this is first and foremost a *prayer to God*. It is fine to call upon the peoples to praise God; but it is also fine to ask God to bring the nations to Himself.

i. When we pray like this, we pray according to the heart of God, Who desires that none perish but all

come to repentance (2Pe 3:9), and Who has ordained a great multitude from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues to praise Him before His throne (Rev 7:9).

b. **Let all the peoples praise You:** It wasn't big enough to pray **Let the peoples praise You**; the psalmist took it a step deeper: **Let *all* the peoples praise You!**

i. "It is in fact a prayer of great vision and daring." (Kidner)

ii. We don't only want the earth to know God's way; we don't even want it to stop with the nations knowing His *salvation*. We want all the peoples to **praise** Him. There is something wonderful about *a lot* of people praising God. Our walk with God is incomplete until we are praising Him.

iii. Do we have the same heart? Or will we write off *some* peoples, instead of having God's heart for **all the peoples?**

2. (4-5) *A joyful anticipation of the Kingdom of God.*

**Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!
For You shall judge the people righteously,
And govern the nations on earth. Selah
Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.**

a. **Let the nations be glad and sing for joy:** Why? Why should the nations be so happy? Because God is coming to **judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth**. Jesus is coming back, and it should make us even more excited about bringing the nations God's way, God's *salvation*, and God's *praise*.

i. God forbid that knowing that Jesus is coming soon should make us *less* passionate about evangelism and

missions. It should make us much *more* passionate.

b. **Govern the nations on earth:** It's a fact. It's going to happen. Jesus Christ is going to reign on planet earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We want to get the nations ready for it.

i. "Because he would 'judge the people righteously'; breaking the yoke of the oppressor, and the iron rod of the prince of this world; becoming himself an advocate in the cause of his church; introducing her into the glorious liberty of the children of God, whose service is perfect freedom." (Horne)

c. **Selah:** This is worthy of reflection – the connection between being passionate about the return of Jesus and a passion to spread the gospel.

d. **Let the peoples praise You:** The idea of Psa 67:3 is so important that the psalmist repeated it. "These words are no vain repetition, but are a chorus worthy to be sung again and again." (Spurgeon)

i. "Let them praise thee (that pronoun 'thee' is emphatical and exclusive), and not their gods of gold and silver." (Trapp)

ii. This will have an ultimate fulfillment in heaven, where people from every tribe and tongue will praise God. "In that day our joy will be even greater because great multitudes from all the nations of the earth will be praising God with us." (Boice)

C. The answer to this prayer.

1. (6a) *Blessing for the earth.*

Then the earth shall yield her increase;

a. **Then the earth shall yield her increase:** This idea may be present in the psalm because the song was written in the harvest season. The abundance of harvest

lifted the thoughts of the psalmist to the greatest harvest yet to come.

i. "If it was a harvest festival song, as the first part of verse 6 would indicate, then the local occasion is graciously submerged in a far wider outlook."
(Morgan)

b. **Then the earth shall yield her increase:** When the earth knows God's way, God's salvation, and God's praise, then she will

yield her increase. The fruit will come forth; the appointed purpose for the earth will be fulfilled. Praise God!

i. God *created* us to know His way, His salvation, and His praise. When we do this the **earth** itself is happy, because the people of the earth are doing what God created them to do. God's natural order for creation and mankind is then honored, and blessing is the result. It is just like using something for the exact use and in the exact way that the manufacturer designed.

c. **Shall yield her increase:** This also tells us that the earth will *never* **yield her increase**, find its fruitfulness and fulfillment, *until* she knows God's way, God's salvation, and God's praise.

i. "'Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee!' What then? 'Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.' Our unthankfulness is the cause of the earth's unfruitfulness. While man is blessing God for his mercies, He is blessing man *with* his mercies."
(William Seeker, in 1660, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (6b-7a) *Blessing for the one who prayed.*

**God, our own God, shall bless us.
God shall bless us,**

a. **God, our own God, shall bless us:** When we share God's heart and vision for the world, we **shall** be blessed. We *must* be blessed.

i. So we see a glorious circle. We are blessed; we use that blessing to pray for and reach a hurting world, and as that aligns us with the heart of God, we are blessed even more, so we use that blessing for all the earth...and it just goes on and on.

ii. It's worth looking at our lives and seeing if we have broken the circle anywhere. Have we stopped believing that God blesses? Have we stopped seeking to extend that blessing? Have we stopped seeing God's heart in it all? If we don't break the circle, we really move from glory to glory.

iii. "Let God (the psalm encourages us to pray), who brings much out of little and distributes it in love, bring such blessing on us as to make us, in our turn, the blessing of the world!" (Kidner)

iv. **God, our own God:** "We never love God aright till we know him to be ours, and the more we love him the more do we long to be fully assured that he is ours." (Spurgeon)

b. **God shall bless us:** It is repeated twice in a row to emphasize the confident expectation. God promised to bless the nations of the earth through the seed of Abraham, and we know this is and will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

i. "There is a constant circular course and recourse from the sea, unto the sea; so there is between God and us; the more we praise him, the more our blessings come down; and the more his blessings come down, the more we praise him again; so that we do not so much bless God as bless ourselves.

When the springs lie low, we pour a little water into the pump, not to enrich the fountain, but to bring up more for ourselves.” (Thomas Manton, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. “If a psalm was ever written round the promises to Abraham that he would be both blessed and made a blessing, it could well have been such as this.” (Kidner)

3. (7b) *Conclusion: The answer to the prayer.*

And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

a. **All the ends of the earth:** If the psalmist had not yet been strong enough, here he makes the point even clearer. God’s heart and plan is for **all the ends of the earth**.

b. **All the ends of the earth shall fear Him:** God gets the respect, the honor, the praise, the glory, He is worthy of. *We* may never get respect; we may never face anything but hardship; we may end up poor and broken and persecuted and even laying down our lives – and be more blessed than ever, because God has used us in a great way.

God Shall Scatter His Enemies

Psa 68:1 God rises up and scatters his enemies. Those who hate him run away in defeat.

Psa 68:2 As smoke is blown away, so he drives them off; as wax melts in front of the fire, so do the wicked perish in God's presence.

Psa 68:3 But the righteous are glad and rejoice in his presence; they are happy and shout for joy.

Psa 68:4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name; prepare a way for him who rides on the clouds. His name is the LORD —be glad in his presence!

Psa 68:5 God, who lives in his sacred Temple, cares for orphans and protects widows.

Psa 68:6 He gives the lonely a home to live in and leads prisoners out into happy freedom, but rebels will have to live in a desolate land.

Psa 68:7 O God, when you led your people, when you marched across the desert,

Psa 68:8 the earth shook, and the sky poured down rain, because of the coming of the God of Sinai, the coming of the God of Israel.

Psa 68:9 You caused abundant rain to fall and restored your worn-out land;

Psa 68:10 your people made their home there; in your goodness you provided for the poor.

Psa 68:11 The Lord gave the command, and many women carried the news:

Psa 68:12 "Kings and their armies are running away!" The women at home divided what was captured:

Psa 68:13 figures of doves covered with silver, whose wings glittered with fine gold. (Why did some of you stay among the sheep pens on the day of battle?)

Psa 68:14 When Almighty God scattered the kings on Mount Zalmon, he caused snow to fall there.

Psa 68:15 What a mighty mountain is Bashan, a mountain of many peaks!

Psa 68:16 Why from your mighty peaks do you look with scorn on the mountain on which God chose to live? The LORD will live there forever!

Psa 68:17 With his many thousands of mighty chariots the Lord comes from Sinai into the holy place.

Psa 68:18 He goes up to the heights, taking many captives with him; he receives gifts from rebellious people. The LORD God will live there.

Psa 68:19 Praise the Lord, who carries our burdens day after day; he is the God who saves us.

Psa 68:20 Our God is a God who saves; he is the LORD, our Lord, who rescues us from death.

Psa 68:21 God will surely break the heads of his enemies, of those who persist in their sinful ways.

Psa 68:22 The Lord has said, "I will bring your enemies back from Bashan; I will bring them back from the depths of the ocean,

Psa 68:23 so that you may wade in their blood, and your dogs may lap up as much as they want."

Psa 68:24 O God, your march of triumph is seen by all, the procession of God, my king, into his sanctuary.

Psa 68:25 The singers are in front, the musicians are behind, in between are the young women beating the tambourines.

Psa 68:26 "Praise God in the meeting of his people; praise the LORD, all you descendants of Jacob!"

Psa 68:27 First comes Benjamin, the smallest tribe, then the leaders of Judah with their group, followed by the leaders of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Psa 68:28 Show your power, O God, the power you have used on our behalf

Psa 68:29 from your Temple in Jerusalem, where kings bring gifts to you.

Psa 68:30 Rebuke Egypt, that wild animal in the reeds; rebuke the nations, that herd of bulls with their calves, until they all bow down and offer you their silver. Scatter those people who love to make war!

Psa 68:31 Ambassadors will come from Egypt; the Ethiopians will raise their hands in prayer to God.

Psa 68:32 Sing to God, kingdoms of the world, sing praise to the Lord,

Psa 68:33 to him who rides in the sky, the ancient sky.
Listen to him shout with a mighty roar.

Psa 68:34 Proclaim God's power; his majesty is over Israel,
his might is in the skies.

Psa 68:35 How awesome is God as he comes from his
sanctuary—the God of Israel! He gives strength and power
to his people. Praise God!

Psalms 68:1-35

Psalms 68 ñ The Victorious Procession of God to Zion

The title of this psalm is †To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song. †Most commentators believe this psalm is connected with the coming of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), celebrating not only that event, but also the faithfulness of God to give Israel victory over her enemies, and to make Jerusalem secure enough to bring the ark into the city.

George Horne described how this psalm was assigned to Pentecost in the Anglican liturgy, no doubt because it describes gifts given upon ascension and is quoted in Ephesians 4. ìThis beautiful, sublime, and comprehensive, but very difficult Psalm, is one of those which the church has appointed to be used on Whitsunday.î

The composition of this psalm makes it a challenge for commentators, both from the Hebrew and in translation. Adam Clarke wrote, ìI know not how to undertake a comment on this psalm: it is the most difficult in the whole Psalter.î

A. The God of triumph.

1. (1-3) God triumphs over His enemies.

Let God arise,

Let His enemies be scattered;

**Let those also who hate Him flee before Him.
As smoke is driven away,
So drive *them* away;
As wax melts before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
But let the righteous be glad;
Let them rejoice before God;
Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.**

a. **Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered:** Using the phrasing of Num 10:35, David proclaimed the triumph of God over all His enemies. When God goes forth, no opponent can stand against Him. They are all **scattered**. Since Moses said those words when the ark of the covenant led Israel from Mount Sinai, David knew it was appropriate to say the same words as the ark came to Jerusalem, its resting place.

i. As David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), he made a dramatic historical connection. To relate it to American history, it would be like a modern American President beginning a speech with the phrase, *Four score and seven years ago* ñ which would immediately be recognized as the first few words of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, originally spoken in 1863.

ii. Numbers 10 describes the departure of Israel from Mount Sinai toward the Promised Land. As they marched, the ark of the covenant led the way. *So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: 'Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.'* (Num 10:35)

iii. The idea was simple, both with Moses in the exodus and David with Israel in the land. It expressed the confidence and the need of God's people: "God, go before us and take care of our enemies. It's too dangerous ahead without You." This spirit of confident dependence is appropriate for every believer.

iv. This is also a fitting prayer by which to remember the glory and strength of the resurrected Jesus. When Jesus rose up, all His enemies scattered. None dared oppose Him. If we are set in Jesus, they scatter before us also because all our victory is found in His resurrected glory.

v. **Let those also who hate Him flee before Him:** "Athanasius telleth us that evil spirits may be put to flight by the psalm; and that Antony, the hermit, fought against the devil with this verse, and worsted him." (Trapp)

b. **As smoke is driven away, so drive them away:** God's enemies have no ability to stand against Him, shown by the images of vanishing **smoke** and melting **wax**. David prayed that the **wicked** would **perish** just as easily.

i. "Wax is hard by itself, but put it to the fire, how soft it is. Wicked men are haughty till they come into contact with the Lord, and then they faint for fear; their hearts melt like wax when they feel the power of his anger." (Spurgeon)

ii. Eph 6:10-18 is the great New Testament passage on spiritual conflict and how God equips the believer for success in that conflict. A repeated theme in that passage is the idea of *standing* against spiritual attack and opposition (*that you may be able to stand...that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand...stand therefore*). What

David described here with vanishing **smoke** and melting **wax** is the exact *opposite* of standing in the sense Ephesians 6 meant it.

c. **But let the righteous be glad:** What is disaster and calamity for the wicked is gladness and extra rejoicing for the righteous. We can't help but be glad in God's victory.

2. (4-6) *Singing praise to the God of triumph.*

Sing to God, sing praises to His name;

Extol Him who rides on the clouds,

By His name YAH ,

And rejoice before Him.

A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows,

Is God in His holy habitation.

God sets the solitary in families;

He brings out those who are bound into prosperity;

But the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*.

a. **Sing to God, sing praises to His name:** There is an aspect of this that is the simple repetition and parallelism of Hebrew poetry. Yet there is a slightly more developed thought in the phrase **sing praises to His name**, having the idea of praising God with knowledge of His character, and knowing Him personally.

b. **Extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him:** David gave us two specific reasons to **rejoice** in God. He **rides on the clouds**, in victory and triumph over all the earth. Also, He has revealed Himself to humanity in the name *Yahweh*, showing His love and loyalty to His people.

i. **Extol Him:** The root *s-l-l* [extol] usually denotes the act of constructing a road or highway (cf.

Isa 57:14; Isa 62:10), but is used here metaphorically with the sense of ãlift upí or ãextol.ã (VanGemeren)

ii. **Who rides on the clouds:** ãBy the ascription ãwho rides on the clouds,í the psalmist contrasts the all-sufficiency of the God of Israel with the powers of Baal whom the Canaanites worshipped as ãthe Rider on the clouds.ã (VanGemeren)

iii. ãThe name JAH is an abbreviation of the name Jehovah; it is not a diminution of that name, but an intensified word, containing in it the essence of the longer, august title. It only occurs here in our version of Scripture, except in connection with other words such as *Hallelujah*.ã (Spurgeon)

iv. ã*Yah*, probably a contraction of the word *Yehovah*; at least so the ancient versions understood it. It is used but in a few places in the sacred writings. It might be translated *The Self-existent*.ã (Clarke)

c. **A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows:** Godís greatness isnít only defined by military-like triumphs. It is also seen in His compassionate concern and care for the weak and needy. The name *Yahweh* is connected to God as the *Becoming One* (Exo 3:13-14), the God who becomes what His people need. The **fatherless** need a **father**; Yahweh is there. The **widows** need a **defender**; God is there.

i. ãHe is the God who acts on behalf of those who look for protection and vindication: the fatherless, the widows, the lonely (NEB [New English Bible], ãthe friendlessí), and the exiles (ãprisonersí) [**those who are bound**].ã (VanGemeren)

ii. ãThe kings and other rulers of this world do not act like this. They surround themselves with the noblest

and richest of their lands, those who can enhance their glory and strengthen their power. The highest glory of God is that he cares for the miserable and surrounds himself with them.† (Boice)

iii. †Does not Jas 1:27, refer to this verse, for we have *ëthe fatherless,í ëthe widow,í* and then the *ëholiness,í* of the God we serve?† (Bonar, cited in Spurgeon)

d. **God sets the solitary in families:** God sees those who live without a close family connection and cares to provide them with **families**. They may be without husband or wife, without father or mother, or without brother or sister nearby; God cares and has family connections among His people for the **solitary**.

i. Since this is God's will for the **solitary**, they should look for and cultivate such relationships.

e. **He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land:** God can help even those who in their poverty have been subjected to some kind of bondage or servitude; God can bring them **into prosperity**. This is not a promised blessing for the **rebellious**.

i. †The most oppressed in Egypt were chained and imprisoned, but the divine Emancipator brought them all forth into perfect liberty. He who did this of old continues his gracious work.† (Spurgeon)

B. God wins the battle for His people.

1. (7-10) *The mighty presence of God with Israel in the wilderness.*

**O God, when You went out before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness, Selah
The earth shook;**

The heavens also dropped *rain* at the presence of God;

Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

You, O God, sent a plentiful rain,

Whereby You confirmed Your inheritance,

When it was weary.

Your congregation dwelt in it;

You, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor.

a. O God, when You went out before Your people:

Having introduced the idea in the first line of the psalm, David continued his thoughts on God's presence with and care for Israel **through the wilderness** on the way to Canaan. **You went out before Your people** emphasizes the idea that God was *with* Israel; He did not abandon them despite the many ways they provoked Him.

i. Marched through the wilderness: "We may speak, if we will, of the "wanderings" of the children of Israel," but we must not think them purposeless strays; they were in reality a well-arranged and well considered march." (Spurgeon)

b. The earth shook: As God was with Israel in the wilderness, they were protected. His *might* was on their side. No other nation could defeat them when they walked with God.

c. The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God: As God was with Israel in the wilderness they were provided for. They would never suffer hunger or thirst as they walked in God's **presence**.

i. As part of that provision, God sent them **a plentiful rain** in a needy time. This care for them was a way God **confirmed** the special place Israel had in His heart and plan. They were His

inheritance.

ii. *Send a plentiful rain*;† either, 1. In the wilderness, where they oft wanted water, and were by God's extraordinary care supplied with it. Or rather, 2. In the land of Canaan, which he calls God's inheritance in the next words.† (Poole)

d. **Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God:** As God was with Israel in the wilderness, they experienced the revelation of His power and glory. Mighty mountains shook at the very presence of God.

i. Verse 8 quotes the allusion to Sinai from the Song of Deborah, Jdg_5:4 f.† (Kidner)

2. (11-14) *Proclaiming God's victory over the kings.*

The Lord gave the word;

Great was the company of those who proclaimed it:

Kings of armies flee, they flee,

And she who remains at home divides the spoil.

Though you lie down among the sheepfolds,

***You will be* like the wings of a dove covered with silver,**

And her feathers with yellow gold.†

When the Almighty scattered kings in it,

It was *white* as snow in Zalmon.

a. **Kings of armies flee, they flee, and she who remains at home divides the spoil:** This was the word of victory that God **gave**, the word of triumph that was

proclaimed by a great **company** of people. The message was that God has won a great victory over mighty enemies (**kings**), and His people, even His weak people, benefited even though they did not directly fight (**she who remains at home divides the spoil**).

i. *This is the message of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.* God won a great victory through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and His people gain everything through that victory in a battle they did not directly fight. This is the message that we as a great company are to proclaim.

ii. *The words in the original are very significant, and do note two things. First, the word which you read "company," in the Hebrew it is "army...great was the army of preachers." An army of preachers is a great matter; nay, it is a great matter to have seven or eight good preachers in a great army; but to have a whole army of preachers that is glorious.* (Bridge, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **Great was the company:** *The Hebrew word is of the feminine gender, because it was the manner of the Hebrews, that when the men returned victorious from the battle, the women went out to meet them with songs of triumph.* (Poole)

iv. The text tells us a **great...company** of women proclaimed the good news of God's victory. It is significant that God chose women to be the first messengers of the good news of the victory of Jesus' resurrection (Mat 28:1-10, Luk 24:1-10). The New Testament says that women should not be in positions of doctrinal authority (1Ti 2:9-14), but they certainly can and should proclaim the good news of God's victory in Jesus Christ.

v. She who remains at home divides the spoil:

Thus, in the spiritual war, apostles, confessors, and martyrs went out to the battle, fought and conquered—the benefits of victory extended to thousands and millions, who, without being exposed to their conflicts and torments, have enjoyed the fruit of their labours. (Horne)

b. You will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver: The people of God come from humble circumstances (they **lie down among the sheepfolds**), but they share in God's great victory over their enemies and are graced with great blessings and gifts.

i. *The wings of a dove, flashing silver and gold*, have been taken to refer to Israel basking in prosperity (Delitzsch), to the enemy in flight (Briggs), to the glory of the Lord manifested at the battle (Weiser), or even to a particular trophy seized from the enemy (cf. New English Bible); but could it not depict the women of 68:12b preening themselves in their new finery, peacocking around, as we might have put it? (Kidner)

c. It was white as snow in Zalmon: Zalmon is another name for Mount Ebal in central Israel, which many would consider more of a high hill than an actual mountain. The meaning of this line is not entirely clear and has been the source of much speculation.

i. According to Jdg 9:48, Zalmon (the Dark One) is one of the mountains by Shechem. (VanGemeren)

ii. Whether the rout of kings there was caused by a blizzard, or whether the battlefield was snowed with weapons and garments (or, later, with bones), or the fleeing armies compared to snowflakes, we cannot tell. (Kidner)

iii. Others take the point of comparison to be the change from trouble to joy which follows the foe's defeat, and is likened to the change of the dark hillside to a gleaming snow field. (Maclaren)

3. (15-18) *Victory on the mountains.*

A mountain of God *is* the mountain of Bashan;

A mountain *of many* peaks *is* the mountain of Bashan.

Why do you fume with envy, you mountains of *many* peaks?

***This is* the mountain *which* God desires to dwell in;**

Yes, the LORD will dwell *in it* forever.

The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand,

***Even* thousands of thousands;**

The Lord is among them *as in* Sinai, in the Holy *Place*.

You have ascended on high,

You have led captivity captive;

You have received gifts among men,

***Even from* the rebellious,**

That the LORD God might dwell *there*.

a. **A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan:**

Bashan was farther north in Israel, in the region of what today is called the Golan Heights. **Bashan** was an impressive mountain, even **a mountain of God** and part of Israel's heritage. Yet it and the other mountains seem to **fume with envy** when they see how God has favored Zion.

i. In comparison with these, Mount Zion was the merest hill: yet Zion, as if to their baleful *envy*, was God's choice. (Kidner)

b. This is the mountain which God desires to dwell

in: God chose Jerusalem even though there were higher and more spectacular mountains. Yet as He often chooses the weak to confound the strong and the foolish to mystify the wise, He chose Zion over Bashan.

i. "This low, little, barren hill of Zion; and God's election maketh the difference, as it did of Aaron's rod from the rest, and doth still of the church from the rest of the world. The Lamb Christ is on Mount Zion." (Trapp)

c. The chariots of God are twenty thousands: By God's command (Deu 17:16), ancient Israel never had many chariots. They were still protected because God fought for Israel and He had power greater than **thousands of thousands** of chariots.

i. "The presence of God is the strength of the church; all power is ours when God is ours. Twenty thousand chariots shall bear the gospel to the ends of the earth; and myriads of agencies shall work for its success." (Spurgeon)

d. You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive: David had in mind God's victory over the people and what happened after the battle was over. After the battle was over, God dealt with His enemies (**led captivity captive**) and He **received gifts** of tribute and submission from them. This was an even greater confirmation of God's ownership of the land (**that the LORD God might dwell there**).

i. "The expression is emphatical. He has conquered and triumphed over all the powers which held us in captivity, so that captivity itself is taken captive." (Newton, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. With the direct leading of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul quoted Psa 68:18 and applied it to Jesus, keeping the context but changing one key word. Paul quoted, *When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men* (Eph 4:8). Paul applied this to the ascension of Jesus into heaven and His sending of the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to His Church. The one word Paul changed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was **received gifts** to *gave gifts*.

C. Praise to the God who wins the battle for His people.

1. (19-23) *God's rescue in battle and victory over the enemy.*

Blessed be the Lord,

Who daily loads us with benefits,

The God of our salvation! Selah

Our God *is* the God of salvation;

And to GOD the Lord *belong* escapes from death.

But God will wound the head of His enemies,

The hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses.

The Lord said, *I* will bring back from Bashan,

I will bring *them* back from the depths of the sea,

That your foot may crush *them* in blood,

And the tongues of your dogs *may have* their portion from *your* enemies.â

a. **Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits:** It is undeniably true that God **daily** gives **benefits** to His people. Yet many think the sense of this verse is more accurately translated, *Blessed be the Lord,*

who daily beareth our burden (Revised Standard Version).

b. **Our God is the God of salvation; and to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death:** This psalm speaks much of the ark coming to Jerusalem, but that only happened after David defeated Israel's surrounding enemies. David thought of how God rescued him in those conflicts. In doing so He used the somewhat uncommon but wonderful phrasing of *Yahweh Adonai* (**GOD the Lord**).

c. **God will wound the head of His enemies:** In describing God's victory, David used an image from Gen 3:15 where God promised that the Messiah would strike a fatal head wound against Satan. The victory would be total, with God's people walking as winners over the field of battle (**that your foot may crush them in blood**).

i. *The hairy scalp*, i.e. his most fierce and terrible enemies. For in ancient times many people used to wear long and shaggy hair, that their looks might be more terrible to their enemies. (Poole)

2. (24-27) *The procession of the ark.*

They have seen Your procession, O God,

The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.

The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after;

Among them were the maidens playing timbrels.

Bless God in the congregations,

The Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

There is little Benjamin, their leader,

The princes of Judah *and* their company,

The princes of Zebulun *and* the princes of Naphtali.

a. **The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary:** After the great triumph over their enemies, David and Israel could bring the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). This was not *David's* parade, but **Your procession, O God**. Honor went to Him.

i. *As the ark, the throne of the invisible God, leads the procession up to its resting place, its progress is a victory march completing the exodus.* (Kidner)

ii. **From the fountain of Israel:** *Reuchlin was wont to say, that the Latins drank out of cisterns, the Greeks out of ponds, but the Hebrews out of the fountain itself.* (Trapp)

b. **There is little Benjamin, their leader:** In the procession of the ark, the small tribe of **Benjamin** had a prominent role. This showed wonderful grace on David's part because his predecessor King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and many kings of David's day would refuse to give them any honor at all.

i. *Little Benjamin.* That tribe is called *little*, partly because it was the youngest, as being descended from Jacob's youngest son Benjamin; and principally because it was exceedingly diminished, and almost extinguished, under the judges. (Poole)

ii. *The fact that there are only four tribes may be explained by the principle of poetic selectivity.* (VanGemeren)

3. (28-31) *Confidence for future victories.*

Your God has commanded your strength;

Strengthen, O God, what You have done for us.

**Because of Your temple at Jerusalem,
Kings will bring presents to You.
Rebuke the beasts of the reeds,
The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples,
Till everyone submits himself with pieces of silver.
Scatter the peoples *who* delight in war.
Envoys will come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God.**

a. **Strengthen, O God, what You have done for us:** David was grateful for the wonderful victory but also knew that many challenges were still ahead. He prayed that God would pour strength into the victory of the past, using it as a foundation for what He would do in the future.

b. **Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to You:** David was confident that in the end, God and His covenant people would survive and thrive despite their enemies among the nations. In the end others would come in tribute to Israel, not the other way around.

i. Ultimately, this speaks of a time still in the future when Jesus will actually reign on earth, the millennium, though there is certainly a kind of fulfillment now through Christians' obedience to the Great Commission and the resulting advance of worldwide Christianity. (Boice)

c. **Rebuke the beasts of the reeds:** Since **reeds** were often associated with the Nile River, David prayed that God would keep them safe against the Egyptians and Ethiopians. He asked God to do that until they, like all the nations, come in submitted tribute to Jerusalem (**till**

everyone submits himself with pieces of silver...envoys will come out of Egypt).

i. The beasts and the bulls denote the oppressors, troublers, and seducers of the nations. They must come to an end, as the nations that have loved warfare and tribute will be humbled and despoiled. (VanGemeran)

ii. *Egypt, Ethiopia*: he names only these, as the great and ancient enemies of God, and of his people, and as a most wicked, and idolatrous, and incorrigible sort of men; see Jer 13:23, Amo 9:7; but by them he synecdochically understands all other nations and people of the like character. (Poole)

iii. Old foes shall be new friends. Solomon shall find a spouse in Pharaoh's house. Christ shall gather a people from the realms of sin. Great sinners shall yield themselves to the sceptre of grace, and great men shall become good men, by coming to God. (Spurgeon)

4. (32-35) All the kingdoms of the earth praise the God of Israel.

Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth;

Oh, sing praises to the Lord, Selah

To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, *which were* of old!

Indeed, He sends out His voice, a mighty voice.

Ascribe strength to God;

His excellence *is* over Israel,

And His strength *is* in the clouds.

O God, *You are* more awesome than Your holy places.

The God of Israel *is* He who gives strength and power to *His* people.

Blessed *be* God!

a. **Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth:** Knowing the ultimate victory of God, David invited the nations to worship Him *now*. It was far better for them to do it now out of a willing, surrendered heart than to do it later as conquered enemies of God.

i. *“We have too much sinning against God, but cannot have too much singing to God.”* (Spurgeon)

ii. **The heaven of heavens, which were of old:**
*“This Hebrew word [of old] answers to *olam*, which looks not only backward to time past; but forward to the future.”* (Poole)

b. **Ascribe strength to God; His excellence over Israel:** The nations would only benefit from recognizing and surrendering to God’s **strength** and noting His rule over Israel.

c. **O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places:** David thought of the land of Israel as God’s holy place, belonging to Him in a special way. Yet David had the sophistication to understand that God was greater than any **holy place**, whether it be land, a mountain, or a temple.

d. **The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people:** The God who is actively involved in the life and victory of His people is worthy of praise.

i. This psalm has been much loved by generals and soldiers: *“To the Crusaders, setting out for the recovery of the Holy Land; to Savonarola and his monks, as they marched to the ‘Trial of Fire’ in the Piazza at Florence; to the Huguenots, who called it ‘The song of battles’; to Cromwell, at Dunbar, as the*

sun rose on the mists of the morning and he charged Leslie's army. (Kirkpatrick, cited in Morgan)

ii. Whatever victory they may have won and inspiration they received from this psalm, their victories did not last. The lasting victory still waits for the Messiah's great kingdom.

Save Me, O God

Psa 69:1 Save me, O God! The water is up to my neck;

Psa 69:2 I am sinking in deep mud, and there is no solid ground; I am out in deep water, and the waves are about to drown me.

Psa 69:3 I am worn out from calling for help, and my throat is aching. I have strained my eyes, looking for your help.

Psa 69:4 Those who hate me for no reason are more numerous than the hairs of my head. My enemies tell lies against me; they are strong and want to kill me. They made me give back things I did not steal.

Psa 69:5 My sins, O God, are not hidden from you; you know how foolish I have been.

Psa 69:6 Don't let me bring shame on those who trust in you, Sovereign LORD Almighty! Don't let me bring disgrace to those who worship you, O God of Israel!

Psa 69:7 It is for your sake that I have been insulted and that I am covered with shame.

Psa 69:8 I am like a stranger to my relatives, like a foreigner to my family.

Psa 69:9 My devotion to your Temple burns in me like a fire; the insults which are hurled at you fall on me.

Psa 69:10 I humble myself by fasting, and people insult me;

Psa 69:11 I dress myself in clothes of mourning, and they laugh at me.

Psa 69:12 They talk about me in the streets, and drunkards make up songs about me.

Psa 69:13 But as for me, I will pray to you, LORD; answer me, God, at a time you choose. Answer me because of your great love, because you keep your promise to save.

Psa 69:14 Save me from sinking in the mud; keep me safe from my enemies, safe from the deep water.

Psa 69:15 Don't let the flood come over me; don't let me drown in the depths or sink into the grave.

Psa 69:16 Answer me, LORD, in the goodness of your constant love; in your great compassion turn to me!

Psa 69:17 Don't hide yourself from your servant; I am in great trouble—answer me now!

Psa 69:18 Come to me and save me; rescue me from my enemies.

Psa 69:19 You know how I am insulted, how I am disgraced and dishonored; you see all my enemies.

Psa 69:20 Insults have broken my heart, and I am in despair. I had hoped for sympathy, but there was none; for comfort, but I found none.

Psa 69:21 When I was hungry, they gave me poison; when I was thirsty, they offered me vinegar.

Psa 69:22 May their banquets cause their ruin; may their sacred feasts cause their downfall.

Psa 69:23 Strike them with blindness! Make their backs always weak!

Psa 69:24 Pour out your anger on them; let your indignation overtake them.

Psa 69:25 May their camps be left deserted; may no one be left alive in their tents.

Psa 69:26 They persecute those whom you have punished; they talk about the sufferings of those you have wounded.

Psa 69:27 Keep a record of all their sins; don't let them have any part in your salvation.

Psa 69:28 May their names be erased from the book of the living; may they not be included in the list of your people.

Psa 69:29 But I am in pain and despair; lift me up, O God, and save me!

Psa 69:30 I will praise God with a song; I will proclaim his greatness by giving him thanks.

Psa 69:31 This will please the LORD more than offering him cattle, more than sacrificing a full-grown bull.

Psa 69:32 When the oppressed see this, they will be glad; those who worship God will be encouraged.

Psa 69:33 The LORD listens to those in need and does not forget his people in prison.

Psa 69:34 Praise God, O heaven and earth, seas and all creatures in them.

Psa 69:35 He will save Jerusalem and rebuild the towns of Judah. His people will live there and possess the land;

Psa 69:36 the descendants of his servants will inherit it, and those who love him will live there.

Psalms 69:1-36

Psalms 69 – Rescued from Deep Waters

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. Set to “The Lilies.” A Psalm of David.***

*As with Psalms 45, this psalm is **Set to “The Lilies.”** The phrase may refer to the general beauty of the composition, to the tune, or even to a six-stringed instrument known as the Shoshannim (the literal translation of the Hebrew).*

"Perhaps in no psalm in the whole psalter is the sense of sorrow profounder or more intense than in this. The soul of the singer pours itself out in unrestrained abandonment to

the overwhelming and terrible grief which consumes it.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. Drowning in disapproval.

1. (1-3) Drowning in a flood of trouble.

Save me, O God!

For the waters have come up to *my* neck.

I sink in deep mire,

Where *there is* no standing;

I have come into deep waters,

Where the floods overflow me.

I am weary with my crying;

My throat is dry;

My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

a. **Save me, O God:** David had many times in his life where this prayer was needed. He felt he was about to drown (**the waters have come up to my neck**). Centuries later, the Son of David heard a drowning disciple cry out, *Save me!* (Mat 14:30)

i. Sometimes we feel like things rush in on us, like drowning in a flood. Other times we feel as if the water level slowly rises until we are overwhelmed. Each has its own type of fear and misery.

b. **I sink in deep mire:** In other psalms David rejoiced at being set upon a rock (Psa 40:2). Here he is in the opposite position, sinking down in the mud and the **mire, where there is no standing.**

i. We can picture Jesus sinking down into the **deep mire** of humanity's sin and guilt, coming truly to the **deep waters, where the floods overflow.** No wonder it was said of Jesus before He went to the cross, *He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed* (Mat 26:37).

ii. Spurgeon described several kinds of **deep mire** the believer may sink into:

- The deep mire of unbelief.
- The deep mire of trial and difficulty.
- The deep mire of inward corruption.
- The deep mire of the devil's temptation and oppression.

c. **I am weary with my crying:** David was worn out with all the energy spent in his crying and crying out as he waited for God to rescue him.

i. **My throat is dry:** "We are, it is to be feared, more likely to be hoarse with talking frivolities to men than by pleading with God." (Spurgeon)

2. (4) *The problem described.*

**Those who hate me without a cause
Are more than the hairs of my head;
They are mighty who would destroy me,
Being my enemies wrongfully;
Though I have stolen nothing,
I still must restore it.**

a. **Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head:** This begins the description of the real problems David poetically described in the previous verses. He lived under the great stress of knowing there were many people who simply hated him, and **without cause**.

i. "Nothing can be conceived more overwhelming than the strange and inexplicable suffering resulting from loyalty to God and zeal for His honor. Undeserved reproach is the most stupendous grief possible to the sensitive soul." (Morgan)

ii. It's hard for us to believe that such a wonderful, godly man as David would be so hated. This is human nature, and was even more evident in the hatred **without cause** directed to Jesus Christ, David's Greater Son.

iii. Jesus specifically referred to Psa 69:4 when He spoke to His disciples the night before His crucifixion. He said, *But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, "They hated Me without a cause."* (Joh 15:25)

iv. "There were those among the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and the Levites, who simply hated him. The reason is not far to find. Until he came and stood beside them, they looked like good men.... They hated him freely; they hated him without cause in himself. The only cause was in their evil hearts." (Barnhouse, cited in Boice)

b. **They are mighty who would destroy me:** Among the many who hated David were some who went beyond the feelings of hatred to active efforts to **destroy** him. Those set on David's destruction were **mighty**; they could make it happen.

i. "The burdened heart finds some ease in describing how heavy its burden is, and the devout heart receives some foretaste of longed-for help in the act of telling God how sorely His help is needed." (Maclaren)

c. **Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it:** The fundamental *injustice* of David's misery increased his sense of despair.

i. "Though innocent, he was treated guilty. Though David had no share in plots against Saul, yet he was held accountable for them." (Spurgeon)

ii. David could only imperfectly say, **I have stolen nothing**, but his Greater Son could say it in a remarkable way. The devil tried to take what was not his – God’s honor and glory in heaven. Adam took what was not his – the fruit forbidden to him. Moses took what was not lawful for him to take – the life of an Egyptian foreman. David took what was not his – Bathsheba into his bed. Yet Jesus *refused* to take what was rightfully His; *He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God (Php 2:6)*, choosing to set aside Divine privileges that were rightfully His. For this, Jesus was condemned by humanity: *He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God (Joh 19:7)*.

3. (5-12) *Living with the constant disapproval of man.*

**O God, You know my foolishness;
And my sins are not hidden from You.
Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts,
be ashamed because of me;
Let not those who seek You be confounded because of
me, O God of Israel.
Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;
Shame has covered my face.
I have become a stranger to my brothers,
And an alien to my mother’s children;
Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up,
And the reproaches of those who reproach You have
fallen on me.
When I wept *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That became my reproach.
I also made sackcloth my garment;
I became a byword to them.
Those who sit in the gate speak against me,
And I *am* the song of the drunkards.**

a. **You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You:** In many of the psalms, David proclaimed his innocence compared to his adversaries. In Psalms 69 David confessed his sin and failings, appealing to God's mercy.

i. "[By] *Foolishness* he means lesser sins, committed through ignorance or inconsiderateness, and by *sins* those of a grosser nature." (Poole)

ii. **My sins are not hidden from You:** "It ought to render confession easy, when we are assured that all is known already." (Spurgeon)

iii. **My sins are not hidden from You:** We may spiritually apply this to Jesus, noting the public nature of His humiliation on the cross. Nailed to the cross, likely with no clothing at all before a mocking public, Jesus accomplished His great work on the cross with nothing **hidden**. He had no sins of His own to bear, but the bearing of our **sins** was not **hidden from** either God or man.

b. **Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me:** David's concern was not only the effect it had upon himself, but especially the effect it had upon the people of God. The thought of embarrassing those who seek God was painful to David.

i. "He feared lest other believing and loyal souls should be deflected from faith, and dishonoured because of what they saw of his sufferings." (Morgan)

ii. "It ought to be the prayer of every Christian, especially if he be a minister of the gospel, that his sufferings in the world may not give just offence to the brethren, or the church." (Horne)

iii. **O Lord GOD of hosts:** "This phrase includes three designations for God. He is the Lord of the universe

[**Lord**, *Adonai*], the LORD of the covenant [**GOD**, *Yahweh*], and the Divine Warrior [**of hosts**, *Zaboath*]." (VanGemeren)

c. **Shame has covered my face:** Among the other problems caused by David's sin, he also had to deal with damaged relationships with his **brothers**.

i. "Unless this aversion of his brethren had pained him, he would not have complained of it. It would not have pained him unless he had felt a special affection for them." (Musculus, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. How strange it was that Jesus' own brothers rejected Him and treated Him as **a stranger** (Joh 7:5, Mar 3:21). If any should have stood by Him and defended Him to the death, it should have been His own brothers.

d. **Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me:** David's sin was not the only cause of his problems. He was also rejected and spoken against because of his **zeal** for God and His **house**.

i. The **zeal** connected to God's **house** for David was evident in his desire to build God a temple (2Sa 7:1-3) and in the diligent preparation he made for the temple that his son Solomon would actually build (1Ch 22:1-5).

ii. When Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple courts at the beginning of His ministry, His disciples remembered this very passage from Psa 69:9 (Joh 2:17).

iii. "*Eaten me up*; exhausted and wasted my natural moisture and vital spirits, which is oft effected by grief and anger, and fervent love and desire; of which passions zeal is composed." (Poole)

iv. "Some men are eaten up with lechery, others with covetousness, and a third class with pride, but the master-passion with our great leader was the glory of God, jealousy for his name, and love to the divine family." (Spurgeon)

e. The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me: David was happy to identify himself with God, counting it an honor to bear the disapproval of those who disapproved of Yahweh.

i. The Apostle Paul referenced Psa 69:9 in speaking of the sacrificial nature of Jesus in Rom 15:3 : *For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."*

f. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach: David was rejected because of his foolishness and sins (Psa 69:5). When he repented, then people disapproved of that.

i. **I also made sackcloth my garment:** "[This was] A fashion at solemn fasts among the Easterlings; as if they thought the coarsest clothing too good for them; and but for shame would have gone stark naked." (Trapp)

ii. **I became a byword to them:** The idea is becoming a proverb, a label. In our world this is a deliberate strategy, to dismiss people simply by giving them a label so that you don't have to think about or engage their ideas. Faithful believers know the sting of this today. They are derided as *religious nuts* and *fundamentalists* and *radicals* and *haters*.

g. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards: David became the

target of scorn and disapproval from almost everyone, from the leaders of the city to the city drunks.

i. *"Of the drunkards; of the scum of the people; of all lewd and debauched persons. Thus both high and low conspired against him."* (Trapp)

ii. *"To this day the tavern makes rare fun of the tabernacle, and the ale-bench is the seat of the scorner."* (Spurgeon)

iii. The High Priest and the thief on the cross both reviled Jesus.

B. The prayer for rescue.

1. (13-15) The appeal to God.

**But as for me, my prayer is to You,
O LORD, in the acceptable time;
O God, in the multitude of Your mercy,
Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.
Deliver me out of the mire,
And let me not sink;
Let me be delivered from those who hate me,
And out of the deep waters.
Let not the floodwater overflow me,
Nor let the deep swallow me up;
And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.**

a. **As for me, my prayer is to You:** With the constant disapproval from men, David naturally and wisely turned to God. He would seek God and make his prayer to the One who would hear **in the multitude of Your mercy.**

i. **In the acceptable time:** "It was a time of rejection with man, but of acceptance with God. Sin ruled on earth, but grace reigned in heaven." (Spurgeon)

b. **Let not the floodwater overflow me:** With poetic repetition, David returned to the image of him drowning, asking God to rescue him from those who **hate** him.

2. (16-18) *Asking for speedy deliverance.*

**Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good;
Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies.**

**And do not hide Your face from Your servant,
For I am in trouble;
Hear me speedily.**

**Draw near to my soul, *and* redeem it;
Deliver me because of my enemies.**

a. **Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good:** Appealing to God because of his loyal love (**lovingkindness**, *hesed*), David once again asked for the **multitude** of God's **tender mercies**.

b. **Do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble:** By presenting himself to God as His **servant** and in **trouble**, David hoped to appeal to God's compassion.

3. (19-21) *The plea for compassion.*

**You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor;
My adversaries *are* all before You.**

**Reproach has broken my heart,
And I am full of heaviness;**

I looked *for someone* to take pity, but *there was* none;

And for comforters, but I found none.

They also gave me gall for my food,

And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

a. **You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor:** The appeal to God's compassion continued,

especially because David bore much reproach in his loyalty to God (Psa 69:9 b).

i. Adam Clarke wrote of Psa 69:19-20 : “This is one of the most forcible appeals to mercy and compassion that was ever made. The language of these two verses is inimitable; and the sentiment cannot be mended. I can devise no comment that would not lessen their effect.” (Clarke)

ii. **My adversaries are all before You:** Spurgeon pictured these words in the heart of Jesus in His great suffering: “The whole lewd and loud company is now present to thine eye: Judas and his treachery; Herod and his cunning; Caiaphas and his counsel; Pilate and his vacillation; Jews, priests, people, rulers, all, thou seest and wilt judge.” (Spurgeon)

b. **I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none:** David asked God for help because there was **none** to help him.

c. **They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink:** Instead of help, David found cruelty from his enemies. They gave him bitter things to eat (**gall for my food**) and sour **vinegar to drink**.

i. “*Gall, or poison, or bitter herbs* [hemlock], Hos 10:4.” (Poole)

ii. “Such are the comforts often administered by the world to an afflicted and deserted soul.” (Horne) As believers we must have special care that we are *not like* the world in this respect, and that we do not increase the misery of those who are already laid low.

iii. This is another line in Psalms 69 that is referred to in the New Testament, specifically in the suffering of Jesus. On the cross they gave Him **vinegar to drink**.

This is described in Mat 27:34; Joh 19:28-29 is even more clear with John adding that this was done *that the Scripture might be fulfilled*.

iv. "What David was offered in metaphor, Jesus was offered in fact, according to Mat 27:34; Mat 27:48, where the Greek words for gall and *vinegar* are those that the Septuagint uses here." (Kidner)

4. (22-28) *Asking for the defeat of his enemies.*

**Let their table become a snare before them,
And their well-being a trap.
Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see;
And make their loins shake continually.
Pour out Your indignation upon them,
And let Your wrathful anger take hold of them.
Let their dwelling place be desolate;
Let no one live in their tents.
For they persecute the *ones* You have struck,
And talk of the grief of those You have wounded.
Add iniquity to their iniquity,
And let them not come into Your righteousness.
Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,
And not be written with the righteous.**

a. **Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap:** David hurt under the scorn of those who sat comfortably while he was in misery. He prayed that their ease would become a trap.

i. In the section from Psa 69:22-28, it's hard to know if David meant, "This is what I want God to do to them" or "This is what I know God will do to them." In either sense the point is clear. "He denounceth ten plagues, or effects of God's wrath, to come upon them for their wickedness." (Dickson, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "*Their table* figuratively sets forth their prosperity, the abundance of all things. It represents peace and security, as in Psa 33:5; Job 36:16." (Venema, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. This peril waiting for those who rejected the man after God's heart as described in Psa 69:22-23 was quoted by the Apostle Paul in Rom 11:9-10 as appropriate to those among his own people who rejected Jesus.

b. **Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see:** David's enemies had distorted vision when they looked at him; he prayed the distortion would become permanent blindness.

c. **Pour out Your indignation upon them:** David asked God to fulfill a series of curses upon his enemies, ending with the wish that they would **be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.**

i. **Let their dwelling place become desolate:** This line is twice referred to in the New Testament. Jesus quoted it in sadness over Jerusalem (Mat 23:38) and Peter quoted it as descriptive of the desolation of Judas (Act 1:20).

ii. **Add iniquity to their iniquity:** "Punish one sin with another (by giving them up to a reprobate sense, to an incurable hardness), and plague them soundly for their sin. The same Hebrew word signifieth both sin and punishment; these two are tied together with chains of adamant." (Trapp)

iii. **Let them be blotted out of the book:** "But to blot names therefrom is not only to kill, but to exclude from the national community, and so from all the privileges of the people of God." (Maclaren)

iv. Most draw a contrast between these severe prayers of David and what seems to be a more loving approach to enemies taught in the New Testament. "But the very juxtaposition of David cursing his tormentors and Jesus praying for His, brings out the gulf between type and antitype, and indeed between accepted attitudes among saints of the Old Testament and the New." (Kidner)

v. That more loving approach is often given example in the great forgiveness Jesus showed even for those who nailed Him to the cross. G. Campbell Morgan had a somewhat contrary analysis: "He said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' That was a prayer inspired by His freedom from all personal vindictiveness. Neither in that prayer, nor in any of His teachings, can we find a word of tolerance for those who do evil, knowing that it is evil." (Morgan)

5. (29-33) *Lifting up the poor and humble one.*

**But I *am* poor and sorrowful;
Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.
I will praise the name of God with a song,
And will magnify Him with thanksgiving.
This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or
bull,
Which has horns and hooves.
The humble shall see *this and* be glad;
And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.
For the LORD hears the poor,
And does not despise His prisoners.**

a. **Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high:**
David did not only pray for the downfall of his enemies. He also asked God to rescue him from drowning in the mire of hateful men and to establish him **up on high**.

i. **I am poor and sorrowful:** “Literally, *I am laid low, and full of pain or grief*. Hence the prayer, ‘Let thy salvation, O God set me on high!’ My oppression has laid me *low*; thy salvation shall make me *high*!” (Clarke)

b. **I will praise the name of God with a song:** Moving to greater confidence, the psalmist vowed to **praise** and **magnify** God for His rescue. This sincere praise honored God even more than an animal sacrifice.

i. **Which has horns and hooves:** “A bullock was in its prime for sacrifice, under the law, when it began to put forth its ‘horns and hoofs.’” (Horne)

c. **You who seek God, your hearts shall live:** The trial of the psalmist would not be wasted. He would become a lesson to others who **seek God** and show them how their **hearts shall live**.

6. (34-36) *The triumphant conclusion.*

**Let heaven and earth praise Him,
The seas and everything that moves in them.
For God will save Zion
And build the cities of Judah,
That they may dwell there and possess it.
Also, the descendants of His servants shall inherit it,
And those who love His name shall dwell in it.**

a. **Let heaven and earth praise Him:** As low as this psalm began, it soars to the highest praise in the end. **Heaven and earth** are not big enough to give God the praise He is due. **The seas and everything that moves in them** will also bring Him praise.

b. **For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah:** The vision is lifted high above the problems of one man. Now David prayed for blessing for Jerusalem

and Judah, **that they may dwell there and possess it.**

i. Some believe that the specific mention of **the cities of Judah** and no mention of broader Israel means this psalm, or this portion of the psalm, must date to either the days of the divided monarchy or of the Babylonian exile. This is not at all necessary. First, it is not unusual that David would have special regard for the land of his own tribe, **Judah**. Second, it may have been composed in the seven years and six months when David was king over Judah, before he was king over the other 11 tribes (2Sa 2:1-11).

c. **Those who love His name shall dwell in it:** Scorned by his enemies, David knew that he and others who **love His name** would **inherit** the land and **dwell in it.**

O Lord, Do Not Delay

Psa 70:1 Save me, O God! LORD, help me now!

Psa 70:2 May those who try to kill me be defeated and confused. May those who are happy because of my troubles be turned back and disgraced.

Psa 70:3 May those who make fun of me be dismayed by their defeat.

Psa 70:4 May all who come to you be glad and joyful. May all who are thankful for your salvation always say, "How great is God!"

Psa 70:5 I am weak and poor; come to me quickly, O God. You are my savior and my LORD—hurry to my aid!

Psalms 70:1-5

Psalms 70 – Help Quickly, O Lord

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.** This psalm certainly*

has the sense of **remembrance**, in that it is almost the same as Psa 40:13-17.

*"This prayer is the shield, spear, thunderbolt and defense against every attack of fear, presumption [and] lukewarmness...which are especially dominant today."
(Martin Luther, cited in James Montgomery Boice)*

A. The plea for deliverance.

1. (1) *Answer me quickly, O God.*

Make haste, O God, to deliver me!

Make haste to help me, O LORD!

a. **Make haste, O God, to deliver me:** David asked God to bring help with **haste**, knowing that if deliverance was too long delayed, it was of no help at all. Therefore he asked with a sense of urgency. Many of our prayers would prevail more with God if they were offered with more urgency.

i. "The petitions in this form of the psalm emphasize the urgency of the matter. There is not a moment to lose; or so it appears." (Kidner)

b. **Make haste to help me, O LORD:** David repeated the request for emphasis, but slightly changed his address to Deity. In the repetition he used the name *Yahweh* (**LORD**), the covenant name of God. By the additional name he hoped to secure additional speed in the reply.

i. G. Campbell Morgan believed that such prayers were flawed in their understanding of God. "It reveals a mistaken conception of God. God never needs to be called upon to hasten. He is never tarrying uselessly or carelessly." (Morgan)

ii. However, Morgan explained that God still wants to hear such imperfect prayers. "We may use any terms

in our prayers, if they are directed to Him, knowing that He will understand, and in His understanding, interpret our faulty terms by His own perfect knowledge, and give us His best answers to our deepest need.” (Morgan)

iii. “Let us take it and use it, knowing that He would far rather have in our song an expression of an honest questioning than any affectation of a confidence not possessed. Moreover, He would rather have from us such a song than silence.” (Morgan)

2. (2-3) David prays against his adversaries.

Let them be ashamed and confounded

Who seek my life;

Let them be turned back and confused

Who desire my hurt.

Let them be turned back because of their shame,

Who say, “Aha, aha!”

a. **Let them be ashamed and confounded who seek my life:** This was the help that David sought. David prayed that God would turn back his enemies and cause them to be **confused**.

i. “The psalmist prays for his enemies’ fall and shame in accordance with the principles of justice and with the promise of God to curse those who cursed his own.” (VanGemeren)

b. **Let them be turned back because of their shame:** This was a bold request, because many times our enemies seem to have no sense of **shame** as they attack and oppose us.

i. “The kindest thing we can pray for people who do wrong is that their plans will fail, for it may be that in their frustration they will see the folly and true end of evil and be reached for God.” (Boice)

ii. "Rest assured, the enemies of Christ and his people shall have wages for their work; they shall be paid in their own coin; they loved scoffing, and they shall be filled with it." (Spurgeon)

c. **Who say, "Aha! Aha!"**: This has the sense of scornful mocking. It was bad enough that David's enemies wanted him dead; they also poured ridicule on him.

i. "*Heach! heach!* a note of supreme contempt." (Clarke)

B. Praise added to the plea.

1. (4) *Calling God's people to praise.*

**Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
And let those who love Your salvation say continually,
"Let God be magnified!"**

a. **Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You**: David called the people of God – those who **seek** Him and **love** His **salvation** – to be happy in Him. We sense that it would be impossible for David to do this unless he also found some measure of joy and gladness in God, despite his urgent problem.

b. **Let those who love Your salvation say continually, "Let God be magnified"**: David thought that to praise God was to *magnify* Him – that is, to make Him larger in one's perception. Magnification does not actually make an object bigger, and we can't make God bigger. Still, to magnify something or someone is to *perceive* it as bigger, and we must do that regarding God.

i. **Those who love Your salvation**: "All men are lovers as well as seekers; for all men love. Some love money more than God's salvation; others love pleasure, even the pleasures of sin, more than God's

salvation; and others love bustle and business more than God's salvation." (Frame, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **Let God be magnified**: "It does not say, let God be magnified by me if he will please to make me successful in business, and happy, and healthy, but it leaves it open. Only let God be magnified, and he may do what he wills with me." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Nor is there any limit as to place or persons. My heart says, 'Let God be magnified among the Wesleyans! The Lord be magnified among the Independents! The Lord be magnified among the Episcopalians! The Lord be magnified among the Baptists!'" (Spurgeon)

iv. "The doxology, 'Let the Lord's name be magnified,' is infinitely more manly and ennobling than the dog's bark of 'Aha, aha.'" (Spurgeon)

2. (5) *The plea repeated: Help quickly, O God.*

**But I am poor and needy;
Make haste to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay.**

a. **But I am poor and needy**: David could combine his sense of great joy in God with a realistic appraisal of his present need. Secure in the truth that God cared for and thought about him, David again appealed to God to be his **help** and **deliverer**, and he needed God to do this without **delay**.

i. **Poor and needy**: "I am a poor man, and a beggar – an *afflicted beggar*; a sense of my poverty causes me to beg." (Clarke)

ii. Spurgeon thought that the sense of being **poor and needy** was also appropriate for a congregation seeking God's blessing. "We are praying for a display

of the Holy Spirit's power in this church, and, in order to have successful pleading in this matter, it is necessary that we should unanimously make the confession of our text, 'I am poor and needy.' We must own that we are powerless in this business." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Poor and needy:** "With such a Father and such a Friend, poverty becometh rich, and weakness itself is strong." (Horne)

iv. The request is repeated again for emphasis: **Make haste to me, O God!** "But God is making haste. On the wings of every hour, quicker than light leaps from world to world, He is on his way. Delays are not denials, but are necessary to the perfecting of his arrangements." (Meyer)

b. **You are my help and my deliverer:** David appealed to God on the grounds that he had *no other help* or **deliverer**. He would not look to self or the gods of the nations. God would answer this complete dependence upon Him.

Forsake Me Not When My Strength Is Spent

Psa 71:1 LORD, I have come to you for protection; never let me be defeated!

Psa 71:2 Because you are righteous, help me and rescue me. Listen to me and save me!

Psa 71:3 Be my secure shelter and a strong fortress to protect me; you are my refuge and defense.

Psa 71:4 My God, rescue me from wicked people, from the power of cruel and evil people.

Psa 71:5 Sovereign LORD, I put my hope in you; I have trusted in you since I was young.

Psa 71:6 I have relied on you all my life; you have protected me since the day I was born. I will always praise

you.

Psa 71:7 My life has been an example to many, because you have been my strong defender.

Psa 71:8 All day long I praise you and proclaim your glory.

Psa 71:9 Do not reject me now that I am old; do not abandon me now that I am feeble.

Psa 71:10 My enemies want to kill me; they talk and plot against me.

Psa 71:11 They say, "God has abandoned him; let's go after him and catch him; there is no one to rescue him."

Psa 71:12 Don't stay so far away, O God; my God, hurry to my aid!

Psa 71:13 May those who attack me be defeated and destroyed. May those who try to hurt me be shamed and disgraced.

Psa 71:14 I will always put my hope in you; I will praise you more and more.

Psa 71:15 I will tell of your goodness; all day long I will speak of your salvation, though it is more than I can understand.

Psa 71:16 I will go in the strength of the LORD God; I will proclaim your goodness, yours alone.

Psa 71:17 You have taught me ever since I was young, and I still tell of your wonderful acts.

Psa 71:18 Now that I am old and my hair is gray, do not abandon me, O God! Be with me while I proclaim your power and might to all generations to come.

Psa 71:19 Your righteousness, God, reaches the skies. You have done great things; there is no one like you.

Psa 71:20 You have sent troubles and suffering on me, but you will restore my strength; you will keep me from the grave.

Psa 71:21 You will make me greater than ever; you will comfort me again.

Psa 71:22 I will indeed praise you with the harp; I will praise your faithfulness, my God. On my harp I will play hymns to you, the Holy One of Israel.

Psa 71:23 I will shout for joy as I play for you; with my whole being I will sing because you have saved me.

Psa 71:24 I will speak of your righteousness all day long, because those who tried to harm me have been defeated and disgraced.

Psalms 71:1-24

Psalms 71 – Older in Years, Strong in Faith

Many commentators believe this is a psalm of David and is his prayer and trust in God in his latter years under the crisis of Absalom's rebellion. Since there is no title and the text of the psalm does not say this, we will not speculate and treat Psalms 71 as if it were written under those circumstances. Instead, we regard it as an anonymous composition.

"We have here THE PRAYER OF THE AGED BELIEVER, who in holy confidence of faith, strengthened by a long and remarkable experience, pleads against his enemies, and asks further blessings for himself." (Charles Spurgeon)

Of interest in this psalm are the many references and allusions to other psalms.

- *Psa 71:1-3 is quoted almost exactly from Psa 31:1-3.*
- *The thoughts of Psa 71:5 seem to be suggested by Psa 22:9-11.*
- *Do not be far from me (Psa 71:12 a) echoes Psa 22:11.*
- *My God, make haste to help me! (Psa 71:12 b) takes the thought of Psa 70:1.*

- Psa 71:13 is similar to Psa 35:26.
- Psa 71:18 carries the thoughts of Psa 22:22; Psa 22:30-31.
- Psa 71:19 uses the phrasing of Exo 15:11.

It is reasonable to think the author of Psalms 71 made study and meditation upon God's word a priority through his life, and the result is that he naturally used the phrases and vocabulary of the Scriptures to pray and praise.

*"But imitative words are none the less sincere; and new thankfulness may be run into old moulds without detriment to its acceptableness to God and preciousness to men."
(Alexander Maclaren)*

A. God our refuge in older years.

1. (1-3) Trusting the LORD who delivers His people.

In You, O LORD, I put my trust;

Let me never be put to shame.

Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape;

Incline Your ear to me, and save me.

Be my strong refuge,

To which I may resort continually;

You have given the commandment to save me,

For You *are* my rock and my fortress.

a. **In You, O LORD, I put my trust:** Many psalms begin with the description of the poet's need. The first line of Psalms 71 looks to God and declares the singer's trust in Yahweh, the LORD, the covenant God of Israel. The psalmist was confident that such trust in the LORD would lead to vindication and that he would **never be put to shame**.

i. "The Psalmist so often begins his prayer with a declaration of his 'faith' which is to the soul in

affliction what an anchor is to a ship in distress.”
(Horne)

b. **Deliver me in Your righteousness:** Because the psalmist trusted in God, he boldly asked God to act righteously on his behalf, and to **deliver** him. He asked that the **righteousness** of God work on his behalf.

c. **Incline Your ear...save me...be my strong refuge:** In the previous line the psalmist established the basis of God’s rescue: *deliver me in Your righteousness*. He then called on God to act righteously on behalf of His needy servant, to rescue and protect him.

i. **Be my strong refuge:** “Here we see a weak man, but he is in a strong habitation: his security rests upon the tower in which he hides and is not placed in jeopardy through his personal feebleness.”
(Spurgeon)

d. **You have given the command to save me:** Confident that it was God’s will, even His **command**, the psalmist prayed with full confidence that God would be his **rock** and his **fortress**.

2. (4-6) *Trusting in the constant care of God.*

**Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.**

For You are my hope, O Lord GOD;

You are my trust from my youth.

By You I have been upheld from birth;

You are He who took me out of my mother’s womb.

My praise *shall be* continually of You.

a. **Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked:** The source of the psalmist’s misery is revealed. There was a **wicked** man, **unrighteous and cruel** who seemed to hold the psalmist in his grip. From this he needed God to **deliver** him.

i. **Out of the hand of the wicked:** “Ever remembering that wickedness is at least as dangerous when it tempts as when it persecutes; and can smile, as well as frown, a man dead.” (Horne)

b. **You are my hope, O Lord GOD:** The psalmist proclaimed his **hope** and **trust** in *Adonai Yahweh*, the Master and covenant God of Israel. It wasn’t just that his hope was *in* Yahweh; He *was* his **hope**.

c. **By You I have been upheld from birth:** Noting God’s care and help to him from the earliest age, the psalmist appealed to God’s continued care, and in turn he promised **praise** to God that was just as continual.

i. “As in the womb I lived upon thee, so from the womb.” (Trapp)

ii. **My praise shall be continually of You:** “Where goodness has been unceasingly received, praise should unceasingly be offered.” (Spurgeon)

3. (7-11) *A strong refuge through a long life.*

I have become as a wonder to many,

But You *are* my strong refuge.

Let my mouth be filled *with* Your praise

***And with* Your glory all the day.**

Do not cast me off in the time of old age;

Do not forsake me when my strength fails.

For my enemies speak against me;

And those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together,

Saying, “God has forsaken him;

Pursue and take him, for *there is* none to deliver *him*.”

a. **I have become a wonder to many, but You are my strong refuge:** Because of the many adversities and attacks, many people were amazed at the psalmist.

They were in **wonder** that a man – especially one so committed to God – could be so afflicted. Despite it all, he found a **strong refuge** in God Himself.

i. “The believer is a riddle, an enigma puzzling the unspiritual; he is a monster warring with those delights of the flesh, which are the all in all of other men; he is a prodigy, unaccountable to the judgments of ungodly men; a wonder gazed at, feared, and, by-and-by, contemptuously derided.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “Christ, in his state of humiliation upon earth, was a ‘sign’ everywhere ‘spoken against,’ as Simeon foretold he would be; Luk 2:34.” (Horne)

iii. **But You are my strong refuge:** “Note, too, the pivotal effect of the phrase *but thou* (71:7b) in re-directing his attention from himself and the encircling enemy; an escape *to* reality rather than from it.” (Kidner)

b. **Let my mouth be filled with Your praise:** Because God had been so faithful as a **strong refuge**, the psalmist was determined to speak **praise** unto God and speak of His **glory**.

i. “God’s bread is always in our mouths, so should his praise be. He fills us with good; let us be also filled with gratitude. This would leave no room for murmuring or backbiting.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Do not forsake me when my strength fails:** The psalmist knew the faithfulness of God through his younger years and now asked that God continue that faithfulness in his **old age** and as his **strength fails**. He knew that *man’s* strength diminishes with old age, but *God’s* strength does not.

i. “It is not unnatural or improper for a man who sees old age coming upon him to pray for special grace,

and special strength, to enable him to meet what he cannot ward off, and what he cannot but dread; for who can look upon the infirmities of old age, as coming upon himself, but with sad and pensive feelings? Who would wish *to be* an old man?" (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. The psalmist did not only speak of the loss of *physical* and *mental* strength, but also the potential loss of *spiritual* strength. Not every believer grows stronger in the Lord as he grows older. The Bible is filled with examples of those who sinned or fell away in the older years.

- David sinned against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah in his mature years (2 Samuel 11).
- Solomon was drawn away to idolatry in his later years (1 Kings 11).
- King Asa's trust in God greatly declined in his later years (2Ch 16:7-12).

d. **For my enemies speak against me:** The psalmist knew what his adversaries said against him. He knew they claimed that **God has forsaken him** and **there is none to deliver him**. His adversity made them think God was no longer with him, so it was a good time to attack (**pursue and take him**).

i. Jesus knew what it was like for men to say against Him, "**God has forsaken him**" (Luk 23:35-37). "Our Lord felt this barbed shaft and it is no marvel if his disciples feel the same. Were this exclamation the truth, it were indeed an ill day for us; but, glory be to God, it is a barefaced lie." (Spurgeon)

4. (12-13) *Help me by striking my enemies.*

O God, do not be far from me;

O my God, make haste to help me!

**Let them be confounded *and* consumed
Who are adversaries of my life;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor
Who seek my hurt.**

a. **O my God, make haste to help me:** With determined enemies as described in the previous lines, the psalmist needed God's help *soon*. He felt as if delayed help was no help at all.

i. The psalmist had to deal with the fact that as his years advanced, his troubles did not go away. The problems remained. This is a significant test for some believers, but the psalmist understood it as compelling his constant and more personal trust in God.

ii. "Notice the still more intense grip of faith in the second clause. The psalmist first says, 'O God,' [and] then he says, 'O my God.' It is grand pleading when we so grasp God with the personal grip of faith that we cry, 'O my God, make haste for my help.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **Let them be confounded and consumed...Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor:** This was the help the psalmist asked for. He wanted God to strike his adversaries with confusion and consumption, with disapproval and dishonor. He not only wanted them defeated, but also discredited.

i. Adam Clarke regarded these **let them** statements more as prophecies than prayers: "They *shall* be confounded: these are *prophetic* denunciations." (Clarke)

B. Rising hope and praise.

1. (14-16) *Continual hope, continual strength.*

**But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.**

**My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours
only.**

a. **I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more:** The psalmist was in a serious crisis and depended upon God for help. Yet in this psalm he does not slip into despair or seem to lose the sense of God's favor. Psalms 71 is a wonderful combination of both problems and praise.

i. **I will hope continually:** "I shall expect deliverance after deliverance, and blessing after blessing; and, in consequence, I will praise thee more and more. As thy blessings abound, so shall my praises." (Clarke)

ii. "When I cannot rejoice in what I have, I will look forward to what shall be mine, and will still rejoice." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Praise You yet more and more:** "A dying hope would bring forth declining songs; as the expectations grew more dim, so would the music become more faint; but a hope immortal and eternal, flaming forth each day with intenser brightness, brings forth a song of praise which, as it shall always continue to arise, so shall it always gather new force." (Spurgeon)

b. **My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day:** He was happy to testify of both God's **righteousness** and His **salvation**, and to do so all day long. He felt the entire day was needed because he did **not know** the **limits** of God's **righteousness** and **salvation**. They are limitless.

i. **I do not know their limits:** "Lord, where I cannot count I will believe, and when a truth surpasses numeration I will take to admiration." (Spurgeon)

c. **I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD:** Looking forward, the psalmist was confident in God's **strength**, despite his sense of diminished personal strength with advancing years (Psa 71:9).

i. "He who goeth to the battle against his spiritual enemies should go, confiding not in his own 'strength,' but in that of the Lord God; not in his own 'righteousness,' but in that of his Redeemer. Such a one engageth with omnipotence on his side, and cannot but be victorious." (Horne)

d. **I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only:** The psalmist was only interested in telling of *God's righteousness*, not of his own or the supposed righteousness of pagan gods.

i. **Of Yours only:** "Man's righteousness is not fit to be mentioned – filthy rags are best hidden; neither is there any righteousness under heaven, or in heaven, comparable to the divine." (Spurgeon)

2. (17-18) *The strength of God from youth to old age.*

**O God, You have taught me from my youth;
And to this *day* I declare Your wondrous works.
Now also when *I am* old and grayheaded,
O God, do not forsake me,
Until I declare Your strength to *this* generation,
Your power to everyone *who* is to come.**

a. **You have taught me from my youth:** The psalmist had the blessed fortune to have followed God and learned of Him from his young years. It was something that benefited him to his older years, still declaring God's **wonderful works**.

i. To be **taught** from one's **youth** displays stability and consistency. There is no fluttering about from one fad to another, from one controversy to another.

ii. "He says, 'O God, thou hast taught me from my youth,' which implies that God had continued to teach him: and so indeed he had. The learner had not sought another school, nor had the Master turned off his pupil." (Spurgeon)

b. When I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation: He prayed for the continued presence of God so that he could **declare God's** strength to a new **generation**.

i. "There is nothing more calculated to keep the heart of age young, than to stand by the young, sympathizing with their ambitions, heartening their endeavours, and stiffening their courage, by recounting the stories of the strength of God, the experiences of His might." (Morgan)

ii. "There is nothing more pitiful, or else more beautiful than old age. It is pitiful when its pessimism cools the ardours of youth. It is beautiful when its witness stimulates the visions and inspires the heroism of the young." (Morgan)

iii. **To everyone who is to come:** "To all succeeding generations, to whom I will leave a lasting monument of this glorious example of all-sufficiency, such as this Psalm is." (Poole)

3. (19-21) Revived by the God who does great things.

Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high,

You who have done great things;

O God, who is like You?

You, who have shown me great and severe troubles,

**Shall revive me again,
And bring me up again from the depths of the earth.
You shall increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.**

a. **Your righteousness, O God, is very high:** The psalmist considered the greatness of God, first in that His **righteousness** was of a different order than that of men, **very high** above that of men; and then, that God is the one who has **done great things**, beyond what men can do. The surpassing **righteousness** and power of God made him ask, **O God, who is like You?**

i. **Who is like You:** "God is alone, – who can resemble him? He is eternal. He can have none *before*, and there can be none *after*; for in the infinite *unity* of his *trinity* he is that eternal, unlimited, impartible, incomprehensible, and uncompounded ineffable Being, whose *essence* is hidden from all created intelligences, and whose *counsels* cannot be fathomed by any creature that even his own hand can form. WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE! God will excite the wonder, amazement, praise, and adoration of angels and men to all eternity." (Clarke)

b. **You who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again:** He understood that all things were in God's hands and that if he had experienced **great and severe troubles**, that too was **shown** to him by God. That same God could also **revive** him, bringing him **up again from the depths of the earth**.

i. "Never doubt God. Never say that He has forsaken or forgotten. Never think that He is unsympathetic. He will quicken again." (Meyer)

c. **You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side:** More than a prayer, this was a confident

proclamation. Though he was older in years, he still expected that God would **increase** his **greatness** and continue his **comfort**.

i. **You shall increase my greatness**: The idea is that as the years continued, the psalmist would see more and more of the **great things** (Psa 71:19) God does. "The word 'greatness' alludes to 'great things' (71:19), i.e., Yahweh's saving acts." (VanGemeren)

4. (22-24) *The music of praise.*

Also with the lute I will praise You—

And Your faithfulness, O my God!

To You I will sing with the harp,

O Holy One of Israel.

My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You,

And my soul, which You have redeemed.

My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long;

For they are confounded,

For they are brought to shame

Who seek my hurt.

a. **With the lute I will praise You.... To You I will sing with the harp**: The psalmist promised to praise God not only with his voice, but also with his musical instruments. It would be a song celebrating God for what He has done (**Your faithfulness**) and for who He is (**O Holy One of Israel**).

i. The psalmist was concerned about properly celebrating God's person and work. "To celebrate it aright, with the melody of instruments, voices, and affections, all in perfect concord, is the duty and delight of the church militant; which, when thus employed, affords the best resemblance of the church triumphant." (Horne)

ii. **O Holy One of Israel**: Kidner notes that this title for God is uncommon outside of the Book of Isaiah and that it describes God as “One in which ‘unapproachable light’ and covenant-love meet together.” (Kidner)

b. **My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long**: His **lips** and **soul** were already given to praise God in song. Now he added the talk of his tongue to speak of God’s **righteousness**, especially as it was seen in triumph over his enemies (**they are brought to shame who seek my hurt**).

i. “This is vindication, not vindictiveness. It will be part of the joy of heaven (*cf.* Rev 15:3; Rev 18:20).” (Kidner)

Give the King Your Justice

Psa 72:1 Teach the king to judge with your righteousness, O God; share with him your own justice,

Psa 72:2 so that he will rule over your people with justice and govern the oppressed with righteousness.

Psa 72:3 May the land enjoy prosperity; may it experience righteousness.

Psa 72:4 May the king judge the poor fairly; may he help the needy and defeat their oppressors.

Psa 72:5 May your people worship you as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon gives light, for ages to come.

Psa 72:6 May the king be like rain on the fields, like showers falling on the land.

Psa 72:7 May righteousness flourish in his lifetime, and may prosperity last as long as the moon gives light.

Psa 72:8 His kingdom will reach from sea to sea, from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.

Psa 72:9 The peoples of the desert will bow down before him; his enemies will throw themselves to the ground.

Psa 72:10 The kings of Spain and of the islands will offer him gifts; the kings of Sheba and Seba will bring him offerings.

Psa 72:11 All kings will bow down before him; all nations will serve him.

Psa 72:12 He rescues the poor who call to him, and those who are needy and neglected.

Psa 72:13 He has pity on the weak and poor; he saves the lives of those in need.

Psa 72:14 He rescues them from oppression and violence; their lives are precious to him.

Psa 72:15 Long live the king! May he be given gold from Sheba; may prayers be said for him at all times; may God's blessings be on him always!

Psa 72:16 May there be plenty of grain in the land; may the hills be covered with crops, as fruitful as those of Lebanon. May the cities be filled with people, like fields full of grass.

Psa 72:17 May the king's name never be forgotten; may his fame last as long as the sun. May all nations ask God to bless them as he has blessed the king.

Psa 72:18 Praise the LORD, the God of Israel! He alone does these wonderful things.

Psa 72:19 Praise his glorious name forever! May his glory fill the whole world. Amen! Amen!

Psa 72:20 This is the end of the prayers of David son of Jesse.

Psalms 72:1-20

Psalms 72 – The King and the King of Kings

*The title of this psalm is **A Psalm of Solomon**. It is possible to translate the Hebrew here (and in almost all the psalms which reference an author) as "A Psalm to Solomon," and*

*some have regarded it as David's psalm to and about his son Solomon and his Greater Son the Messiah. Yet, the most natural way to take the title is as it is given, **A Psalm of Solomon** with the understanding that the line about David in 72:20 refers to the collection of Book Two of Psalms, which is heavy with David's psalms, separating Book Two from Book Three, which begins with 11 psalms authored by Asaph.*

It is possible that Solomon compiled Book Two of Psalms (Psalms 42-72) and composed this psalm as a fitting conclusion for the collection of mostly David's psalms. It is a fitting conclusion, because it unexpectedly does not focus upon David himself, but on the Messiah – the King of Kings and the Son of David.

"The New Testament nowhere quotes it as Messianic, but this picture of the king and his realm is so close to the prophecies of Isa 11:1-5 and Isaiah 60-62 that if those passages are Messianic, so is this." (Derek Kidner)

A. Prayer for a king.

1. (1-4) The king's prayer for wisdom.

**Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's Son.
He will judge Your people with righteousness,
And Your poor with justice.
The mountains will bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.
He will bring justice to the poor of the people;
He will save the children of the needy,
And will break in pieces the oppressor.**

a. Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king's Son: Solomon began this psalm asking God to bless him as the monarch of Israel, and to bless him with wise **judgments** and a reign

displaying God's **righteousness**. This was the same heart behind his great request to God in 1Ki 3:5-9.

- i. These prayers "reflect the antique conception of a king as the fountain of justice, himself making and administering law and giving decisions." (Maclaren)
- ii. "As a royal psalm it prayed for the reigning king, and was a strong reminder of his high calling; yet it exalted this so far beyond the humanly attainable (e.g. in speaking of his reign as endless) as to suggest for its fulfillment no less a person than the Messiah, not only to Christian thinking but to Jewish." (Kidner)
- iii. "The Targum [an ancient Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible] at verse 1 adds the word 'Messiah' to 'the king', and there are rabbinic allusions to the psalm which reveal the same opinion." (Kidner)

b. **He will judge Your people with righteousness:** Anticipating the blessing asked for, Solomon announced his intention to rule with **righteousness** and **justice**, even for the **poor** (who are often denied justice).

- i. "*Righteousness* dominates this opening, since in Scripture it is the first virtue of government, even before compassion (which is the theme of verses 12-14)." (Kidner)

c. **The mountains will bring peace to the people:** Sometimes **mountains** represent human governments in the Bible, and Solomon may have intended this allusion. He had in mind a national government (**mountains**) that blessed the people and local government (**the little hills**) that ruled with **righteousness**. This godly government would accomplish at least three things:

- **He will bring justice to the poor:** Though they are often denied justice, the king and his government

will make sure that justice is administered fairly.

- **He will save the children of the needy:** The king and his government will rescue those most vulnerable in society.

- **And will break in pieces the oppressor:** The king and his government will protect Israel, keeping the people free from external domination and from internal corruption.

i. **Mountains will bring peace:** We have connected the idea of **mountains** with human government, yet there are different understandings of this. Spurgeon quoted three different authors with three different ideas as to what these **mountains** speak of.

- Geddes wrote they spoke of messengers placed on a series of mountains or hilltops who distributed news through a land.

- Mollerus wrote that it spoke of the fertility of soil on the mountains.

- Caryl wrote that it speaks of the safety from robbers who often infested mountain passes.

- Maclaren wrote of another sense: "The mountains come into view here simply as being the most prominent features of the land."

ii. **Children of the needy:** "The phrase, *the children of the afflicted*, is put for *the afflicted*, an idiom quite common in Hebrew." (Calvin, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **Break in pieces the oppressor:** "The tale bearer, saith the Greek; the slanderer, saith the Latin; the devil, say some. Over these he shall turn the wheel." (Trapp)

2. (5-7) *Blessings upon such a well-governed kingdom.*

**They shall fear You
As long as the sun and moon endure,
Throughout all generations.
He shall come down like rain upon the grass before
mowing,
Like showers *that* water the earth.
In His days the righteous shall flourish,
And abundance of peace,
Until the moon is no more.**

a. **They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure:** The answer to the prayer in the previous lines would mean that the people of Israel – the king, his government, and the people – would **fear** the Lord forever, **throughout all generations**.

i. "As the psalmist pours out his petitions, they glide into prophecies; for they are desires fashioned upon promises, and bear, in their very earnestness, the pledge of their realisation." (Morgan)

b. **He shall come down like rain upon the grass:** God's presence would then be with His people as broad, as thick, and as good as **showers that water the earth**.

i. "The word *zggez*, which we translate *mown grass*, more properly means *pastured grass* or *pastured land*; for the *dew* of the night is intended to restore the grass which has been eaten in the course of the day." (Clarke)

ii. "Refreshing and salutary, as the drops of heaven, to the shorn and parched grass, is the mild administration of a wise and pious prince to his subjects. And what image can convey a better idea of those most beneficial and blessed effects which followed the descent of the Son of God upon the earth, and that of the Spirit, at the day of Pentecost?

The prophets abound with descriptions of those great events, couched in terms borrowed from the philosophy of rain and dew. See Isa 44:3; Isa 55:10; Hos 14:5; Heb 6:7." (Horne)

iii. The Scriptures often connect the ideas of righteous and just government and blessing upon the ecology and produce of the land. "The Psalm as a whole, shows that what we call the 'moral realm' and the 'realm of nature' form one indivisible whole to the Israelites. A community which lives according to righteousness enjoys not only internal harmony, but also prosperity in field and flock." (Anderson, cited in VanGemeren)

iv. "Injustice has made Palestine a desert; if the Turk and Bedouin were gone, the land would smile again; for even in the most literal sense, justice is the fertilizer of lands, and men are diligent to plough and raise harvests when they have the prospect of eating the fruit of their labours." (Spurgeon)

c. **In His days the righteous shall flourish:** As God sends such a rich blessing, His people will **flourish** and there will be an **abundance of peace** (*shalom*) that will last beyond comprehension (**until the moon is no more**).

i. In a limited sense, this was true of Solomon. "In the kingdom of Solomon, through the influence of his wisdom, good men were encouraged, righteousness flourished, and the land enjoyed tranquility." (Horne)

ii. In a greater sense, it points to Jesus alone. The connection between the **righteous** and **peace** reminds us of Melchizedek, the One who was and is both the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace (Heb 7:1-3).

B. The Greater King.

1. (8-11) Looking to a greater King, a greater reign.

**He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before
Him,
And His enemies will lick the dust.
The kings of Tarshish and of the isles
Will bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba
Will offer gifts.
Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him;
All nations shall serve Him.**

a. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea:

Solomon began to lift his vision above a desire for his own reign to be blessed toward the anticipation of the reign of a greater Son of David, Messiah the King. This King would **have dominion** far greater than Solomon.

i. Under David and Solomon, Israel had its greatest extent of territory.

ii. "The messianic government spreads out over seas, rivers, and land. It is unnecessary to restrict the meaning to a particular sea or river because 72:8 speaks of his universal rule, encompassing seas, rivers, and lands." (VanGemeren)

b. His enemies will lick the dust: To oppose the King with such a great dominion meant certain defeat. His enemies would be brought low in a way associated with the curse upon the enemy in Gen 3:14-15.

i. "Bear in mind that it was a custom with many nations that, when individuals approached their kings, they kissed the earth, and prostrated their whole

body before them. This was the custom especially throughout Asia." (LeBlanc, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "Tongues which rail at the Redeemer deserve to lick the dust." (Spurgeon)

c. **All kings shall fall down before Him:** Solomon sang of a king far greater than Solomon ever was. **All nations shall serve Him**, even those from faraway places and islands.

i. This was prophesied in a beautiful way by the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7, which had in mind both David's immediate son and successor (Solomon) and David's ultimate Son and Successor (Jesus the Messiah). Both were in view in 2Sa 7:11-16, and both are in view in Psalms 72. The fulfillment in Solomon's day is described in 1Ki 10:23-25.

ii. "The distant nations are the kings of the 'distant shores' (72:10): Tarshish (cf. Psa 48:7), Sheba (modern Yemen), and Seba (an African nation: cf. Gen 10:7; Isa 43:3; Isa 45:14)." (VanGemeren)

iii. "*Tarshish* may have been Tartessus in Spain; it was in any case a name associated with long voyages; likewise *the isles* or 'coastlands' were synonymous with the ends of the earth: see, e.g. Isa 42:10." (Kidner)

2. (12-14) *The compassionate rule of Messiah the King.*

**For He will deliver the needy when he cries,
The poor also, and *him* who has no helper.
He will spare the poor and needy,
And will save the souls of the needy.
He will redeem their life from oppression and
violence;
And precious shall be their blood in His sight.**

a. **He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also:** The justice and righteousness Solomon prayed for and aspired to regarding his own reign (Psa 72:1-4) will be perfectly fulfilled in the Greater King.

i. "All helpless ones are under the especial care of Zion's compassionate King; let them hasten to put themselves in fellowship with him. Let them look to him, for he is looking for them." (Spurgeon)

b. **He will save the souls of the needy:** His work will go beyond what is thought of today as *social work*; the Greater King will also work to **save the souls** of the **poor and needy**.

c. **He will redeem their life from oppression and violence:** We can see this in both the **oppression and violence** they are targets of, and of that which they inflict upon others. Both are forms of slavery that require one to be set free from by purchase (**redeem their life**).

i. **Oppression and violence:** "Those two noted engines of all mischief to the poor, viz. privy deceit... and open violence, fraud and force, craft and cruelty." (Trapp)

ii. "The king is represented in Psa 72:14 as taking on himself the office of Goel, or Kinsman-Redeemer, and ransoming his subjects' lives from 'deceit and violence.'" (Maclaren)

iii. Blessed as it was, Solomon's own reign did not live up to this fully. After his death they complained of his oppression (1Ki 12:4). "Solomon continues to speak more wisely than he was ever to act." (Kidner)

d. **Precious shall be their blood in His sight:** The lives of the **poor and needy** are often considered to be of little value. The Messiah, the Greater King, will regard

their lives as **precious**. This is especially meaningful when we consider the cheap regard for life outside of and before the world influenced by Christianity.

3. (15-17) The exaltation of the Greater King.

And He shall live;

And the gold of Sheba will be given to Him;

Prayer also will be made for Him continually,

And daily He shall be praised.

There will be an abundance of grain in the earth,

On the top of the mountains;

Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon;

And *those* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

His name shall endure forever;

His name shall continue as long as the sun.

And *men* shall be blessed in Him;

All nations shall call Him blessed.

a. **He shall live:** Commentators debate if the **He** spoken of here refers to the ransomed man of the previous lines or of the King who ransomed him. Since the previous lines speak of a multitude redeemed and this **He** speaks of One, and because the following lines fit much better with the King, we regard **He shall live** as both a wish and a declaration for the King.

i. "How little this might mean is obvious from the address, 'O king, live forever', in the book of Daniel; yet also how much, can be seen from the Messianic prophecies and from the way these were understood in New Testament times." (Kidner)

ii. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Solomon wrote things regarding Messiah the King that were perhaps beyond his own understanding. It's possible he never knew how wonderful it would be to say of the King of Kings who laid down His life as a sacrifice for sins that after

three days in the tomb all would see and say, **He shall live.**

b. **The gold of Sheba will be given to Him:** The Greater King would receive gifts and honor and praise. In turn He would bestow great blessing on the earth (**an abundance of grain in the earth**) and upon His people (**those of the city shall flourish**).

i. "Poor as God's people usually are, the era will surely arrive when the richest of the rich will count it all joy to lay their treasures at Jesus' feet." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon:** "It shall yield such abundance of corn, that the ears, being thick, and high, and full of corn, shall, when they are shaken with the wind, make a noise not unlike that which the tops of the trees of Lebanon sometimes make upon the like occasion." (Poole)

iii. "Gold, grain, and fruit were ancient measures of prosperity. So this is a way of saying that under the reign of Jesus there will be prosperity of every conceivable kind." (Boice)

c. **Prayer also will be made for Him continually:** We can think of how prayer could and would be offered **for** an earthly king, but we don't often think of believers praying for Jesus Messiah.

i. We can say that we pray **for** Jesus when we pray for one of His people. There is a sense in which we pray **for** Jesus when we pray for the spread of His gospel.

d. **His name shall endure forever:** Solomon sensed that this Greater Son of David, the Greater King, would be more than a great man. He and His fame, and greatness of His character, would **endure forever**.

i. "We see on the shore of time the wrecks of the Caesars, the relics of the Moguls, and the last remnants of the Ottomans. Charlemagne, Maximilian, Napoleon, how they flit like shadows before us! They were and are not; but Jesus for ever is." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The perpetuity, which he conceived of as belonging to a family and an office, really belongs to the One King, Jesus Christ, whose Name is above every name, and will blossom anew in fresh revelations of its infinite contents, not only while the sun shines, but when its fires are cold and its light quenched." (Maclaren)

e. Men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed: Solomon recognized that this King of Kings was not only the fulfillment of the promise made to David in 2Sa 7:11-16. He was also the fulfillment of the great promise made to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 : *In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

i. "Christ is all blessing. When you have written down his name, you have pointed to the fountain from which all blessings flow." (Spurgeon)

ii. "To us the song of this psalm is a prophecy of hope. We have seen the King, and we know the perfect Kingdom must come, for God cannot be defeated." (Morgan)

iii. Psalms 72 speaks powerfully of the kingdom of the King of Kings and speaks of it in terms of His *personal* rule, not ruling through an institution such as the Church. "In this Psalm, at least, we see a personal monarch, and he is the central figure, the focus of all the glory; not his servant, but himself do we see possessing the dominion and dispensing the government. Personal pronouns referring to our great King are constantly occurring in this Psalm; *he* has

dominion, kings fall down before *him*,: and serve *him*; for *he* delivers; *he* spares, *he* saves, *he* lives, and daily is *he* praised." (Spurgeon)

4. (18-19) *Closing doxology of praise.*

**Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!
And blessed be His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen and Amen.**

a. **Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things:** Solomon was moved to praise when he considered the greatness of Messiah the King. The work in and through Jesus the Messiah is the work of **wondrous things**.

b. **Let the whole earth be filled with His glory:** The thought of the greatness of God and His work naturally led the heart to long that this blessing be extended through **the whole earth** and that it not only be touched by but **filled with His glory**.

i. "We pray that the atheist, the blasphemer, the hardened rebel, the prodigal, may each be filled with God's glory; and then we ask for mercy for the whole earth; we leave not out so much as one, but so hope and expect the day when all mankind shall bow at the Saviour's feet." (Spurgeon)

ii. There is also a tragedy in this psalm. As high as it soars with the concept of the king and his reign, we remember the sad disappointment of how quickly the monarchy in Israel declined after Solomon. There were certainly some good kings after him, but the glory of the kingdom went from Solomon's gold (1Ki 10:16-17) to Rehoboam's bronze (1Ki 14:25-28) in only about five years.

5. (20) *End to the Second Book of Psalms.*

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

a. **The prayers of David:** We take this as Solomon's postscript on the collection of psalms gathered into Book Two. David authored most of the psalms in Book Two, and Asaph composed the first 11 psalms of Book Three, so this is a good marking point. We also note that these are not only *songs*, but also **prayers**.

b. **David the son of Jesse:** Because this psalm so exalts the King of Kings, Solomon properly did not refer to David with any royal title, though deserved. David happily takes the lower place before the Greater Son of David and is simply **the son of Jesse**, a simple farmer of Bethlehem.

God Is My Strength and Portion Forever

Psa 73:1 God is indeed good to Israel, to those who have pure hearts.

Psa 73:2 But I had nearly lost confidence; my faith was almost gone

Psa 73:3 because I was jealous of the proud when I saw that things go well for the wicked.

Psa 73:4 They do not suffer pain; they are strong and healthy.

Psa 73:5 They do not suffer as other people do; they do not have the troubles that others have.

Psa 73:6 And so they wear pride like a necklace and violence like a robe;

Psa 73:7 their hearts pour out evil, and their minds are busy with wicked schemes.

Psa 73:8 They laugh at other people and speak of evil things; they are proud and make plans to oppress others.

Psa 73:9 They speak evil of God in heaven and give arrogant orders to everyone on earth,

Psa 73:10 so that even God's people turn to them and eagerly believe whatever they say.

Psa 73:11 They say, "God will not know; the Most High will not find out."

Psa 73:12 That is what the wicked are like. They have plenty and are always getting more.

Psa 73:13 Is it for nothing, then, that I have kept myself pure and have not committed sin?

Psa 73:14 O God, you have made me suffer all day long; every morning you have punished me.

Psa 73:15 If I had said such things, I would not be acting as one of your people.

Psa 73:16 I tried to think this problem through, but it was too difficult for me

Psa 73:17 until I went into your Temple. Then I understood what will happen to the wicked.

Psa 73:18 You will put them in slippery places and make them fall to destruction!

Psa 73:19 They are instantly destroyed; they go down to a horrible end.

Psa 73:20 They are like a dream that goes away in the morning; when you rouse yourself, O Lord, they disappear.

Psa 73:21 When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt,

Psa 73:22 I was as stupid as an animal; I did not understand you.

Psa 73:23 Yet I always stay close to you, and you hold me by the hand.

Psa 73:24 You guide me with your instruction and at the end you will receive me with honor.

Psa 73:25 What else do I have in heaven but you? Since I have you, what else could I want on earth?

Psa 73:26 My mind and my body may grow weak, but God is my strength; he is all I ever need.

Psa 73:27 Those who abandon you will certainly perish; you will destroy those who are unfaithful to you.

Psa 73:28 But as for me, how wonderful to be near God, to find protection with the Sovereign LORD and to proclaim all that he has done!

Psalms 73:1-28

Psalms 73 – “My Feet Almost Slipped”

The title of this psalm (A Psalm of Asaph) tells us that it was written by the great singer and musician of David and Solomon’s era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.

This wonderful psalm may be best understood by the dominant pronouns within. When Asaph is troubled by the fate of the ungodly (verses 1-12), the dominant pronoun is they. When he describes his own frustrated thinking leading to the resolution (verses 13-17), the dominant pronoun is I. When he finds resolution of the problem (verses 18-22), the dominant pronoun is You, in the sense of God. When He proclaims the assurance of his faith and fellowship with God (verses 23-28), the dominant pronouns are a mixture of You and I.

A. The Problem Presented.

1. (1-3) The contradiction between the goodness of God and the prosperity of the wicked.

**Truly God is good to Israel,
To such as are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;**

**My steps had nearly slipped.
For I was envious of the boastful,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**

a. **Truly God is good to Israel:** Asaph began this psalm with a simple declaration of the goodness of God to His people. By this he indicated that he understood not only that God was good, but that He actively showed that goodness **to Israel** and to the **pure in heart**.

i. Asaph was an organizer and leader for the temple choirs in the days of David, and presumably for Solomon after him. He was one who *prophesied according to the order of the king* (1Ch 25:1-2).

ii. "The writer does not doubt this, but lays it down as his firm conviction. It is well to make sure of what we do know, for this will be good anchor-hold for us when we are molested by those mysterious storms which arise from things which we do not understand."
(Spurgeon)

b. **But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled:** Asaph knew what he said about God in the first verse was true; yet there was another truth that disturbed him greatly. It made him **almost** stumble; it made his **steps** nearly slip.

i. "It shows that having doubts like Asaph's is not incompatible with responsible Christian living. It may have been true, as he says, that his feet 'had *almost* slipped.' But they had not actually slipped, or at least they had not slipped so far as to make him forget his responsibilities as a leader of God's people." (Boice)

c. **For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked:** This was another truth that seemed to contradict what Asaph knew of God as declared in the first verse. He knew that God was **good**

to Israel and to the **pure in heart**, but it also seemed that God was good to the **boastful** and to the **wicked**. It all seemed so unfair to Asaph, and this made him **almost** stumble and slip.

i. Asaph saw the same troubling evidence that many see every day in their own lives. Many people cannot deny that God is good to them; but it also seems that God is good – perhaps *too good* – to the **boastful** and the **wicked**. It is then easy to envy the wicked and their **prosperity**.

ii. Such deep questions cause one to question the moral order of the universe. After all, one asks, what good is there in being good? If the wicked enjoy the same prosperity as the **pure in heart**, then what is the reward of godliness?

iii. "If God is in control of things, the plans of the wicked should flounder. They should even be punished openly. The godly alone should prosper. But that is not what Asaph saw, and it is not what we see either. We see scoundrels getting rich. Utterly degenerate persons, like particularly vile rock musicians or movie stars, are well paid and sought after. Even criminals get rich selling their crime stories." (Boice)

iv. "The faith in which he had been reared and to which he clung made his difficulties in this respect only the greater. He had been taught that the good always prosper and that the wicked always go to the wall." (Chappell)

v. We could say that this was the same faith believed so strongly by Job's friends – the same faith that prompted the question of the disciples, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Joh 9:2)

vi. "It is a pitiful thing that an heir of heaven should have to confess 'I was envious,' but worse still that he should have to put it, 'I was envious at the foolish.'" (Spurgeon)

2. (4-9) *The good life of the wicked.*

**For *there are* no pangs in their death,
But their strength *is* firm.
They *are* not in trouble *as other* men,
Nor are they plagued like *other* men.
Therefore pride serves as their necklace;
Violence covers them *like* a garment.
Their eyes bulge with abundance;
They have more than heart could wish.
They scoff and speak wickedly *concerning*
oppression;
They speak loftily.
They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walks through the earth.**

a. **For there are no pangs in their death:** Perhaps Asaph had seen some of the wicked die agonizing and painful deaths; but he had seen enough wicked people die peaceful deaths to make him say, "**there are no pangs in their death.**"

i. "Men may die like lambs and yet have their place for ever with the goats." (Matthew Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "'He fell asleep like a child,' say his friends; and others exclaim, 'He was so happy, that he must be a saint.' Ah! This is but their apparent end. God knoweth that the dying repose of sinners is but the awful calm which heralds the eternal hurricane." (Spurgeon)

b. **They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued as other men:** Here Asaph developed his argument even further. Not only are the wicked rewarded equally to the righteous, they seem to be *more blessed* than the pure in heart. Their lives seem to have *less trouble* and are not as **plagued** as the average man.

i. "While many saints are poor and afflicted, the prosperous sinner is neither. He is worse than other men, and yet he is better off; he ploughs least, and yet has the most fodder. He deserves the hottest hell, and yet has the warmest nest." (Spurgeon)

c. **Therefore pride serves as their necklace:** In Asaph's analysis, because God did not punish the wicked as He should, they simply became *more* wicked, and even wore their **pride** as a prominent **necklace**. They therefore became more violent, greedy, and more likely to scoff and blaspheme.

i. "*Chains of gold, and golden rings,* were ensigns of magistracy and civil power. As these chains encompassed their necks, or the rings their wrists and fingers, as the signs of the *offices* in virtue of which they acted; so violence, oppressive conduct, encompassed them." (Clarke)

ii. We appreciate the poetic power of Asaph's description. We see the wicked man with an ostentatious **necklace** of **pride**. He is covered with an impressive **garment**, but that covering is **violence** toward others. He is so filled with good food that his **eyes bulge with abundance**, and he has **more than heart could wish**. His mouth always scoffs and speaks **wickedly**, and his **mouth** is **set...against the heavens**. Worst of all, *everyone* seems to hear about this wicked man and his

prosperity, because it seems as if his **tongue walks through the earth.**

iii. "The whole passage is a masterly picture of these darlings of fortune: overblown, overweening; laughable if they were not so ruthless; their vanity egging them on to hector the very universe." (Kidner)

iv. Together with Asaph, we picture these rich, famous, proud, showy, violent, greedy, foul-speaking gangsters strutting about enjoying their wickedness. We are as troubled by their prosperity and the seeming indifference of God toward them as Asaph was.

v. **Their eyes bulge with abundance:** "By fatness, or corpulency, the natural lines of the face are *changed*, or rather *obliterated*. The characteristic distinctions are gone; and we see little remaining besides the *human hog*." (Clarke)

3. (10-14) *The doubts of the godly.*

**Therefore his people return here,
And waters of a full *cup* are drained by them.
And they say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?"
Behold, these *are* the ungodly,
Who are always at ease;
They increase *in* riches.
Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.
For all day long I have been plagued,
And chastened every morning.**

a. **Therefore his people return here:** This wicked man has associates who are just like him, and they take and take just as he does (**waters of a full cup are drained by them**).

i. This is a difficult verse to translate and fit into the context. "Most modern versions find here the popular worship of success." (Kidner)

b. **They say, "How does God know?"** In the previous verses Asaph told us that the wicked man sets his mouth against heaven. Here, he tells us what the wicked man and his associates say against heaven. They claim that God is blind or ignorant; therefore, they can do as they please and God is unable to do anything against them.

c. **Behold, these are the ungodly:** In his frustration, Asaph saw the **ungodly** life as the *good* life. They are **always at ease**; they always **increase in riches**. They are rewarded for their wickedness by a God who seems to be as unknowing as the wicked say that He is.

d. **Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain:** The frustration kept building for Asaph. He felt that it was **vain** for him to be pure in heart, **vain** for him to have clean hands before God, **vain** for him to be innocent.

i. "Poor Asaph! He questions the value of holiness when its wages are paid in the coin of affliction." (Spurgeon)

e. **For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning:** Asaph felt that his life was much more difficult than the life of the ungodly man. While the wicked man enjoyed all his wealth and ease and pride, Asaph had to endure being **plagued** and **chastened**, and he had to endure it **all day long** and **every morning**.

i. **Plagued** is bad, yet one might assign a plague to anonymous and natural causes. **Chastened** is even worse, because it implies that *God Himself* was afflicting Asaph with the difficulties. God was easy on the wicked and hard on Asaph.

ii. As we would expect in a poetic outpouring, Asaph was exaggerating. The life of the wicked was not as good as he observed, nor was his life as bad as he felt it to be. Yet one cannot deny or contradict the *feeling* that prompted Asaph in this psalm, and we can instead strongly identify with that feeling.

B. The Problem Understood.

1. (15-17) The power of a new perspective.

If I had said, "I will speak thus,"

Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

When I thought *how* to understand this,

It was too painful for me—

Until I went into the sanctuary of God;

Then I understood their end.

a. **If I had said, "I will speak thus"**: Asaph caught himself from sliding further into despair over the perceived prosperity of the wicked. He did not want to be **untrue to the generation of Your children**, in the sense that he did not want to promote this sense of injustice and despair that he felt.

b. **When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me**: Asaph was caught in a trap. He could not deny the evidence that said that the wicked and ungodly often have good lives. He could not deny that his own life was often hard, leaving him feeling plagued and chastened by God. He felt all this to be true, but he also felt he could not talk about it because it would be **untrue** to others. Therefore, it was all **too painful** for him.

c. **Until I went into the sanctuary of God**: The crisis seemed to build and build for Asaph, **until** he went into the house of the Lord. There he gained a perspective on

his problem that he did not have before. There he was able to see things from an *eternal* viewpoint, and he then **understood their end**.

i. "What then did the psalmist do? The answer to some will seem perfectly childish. He went to church.... Just what others got out of this service we are not told. But the psalmist came into possession of certain gripping convictions that steadied him and enabled him to walk in the after days with firmness and assurance." (Chappell)

ii. What did going to the house of God do for Asaph? There, he could gain understanding in several ways.

- By prayer and worship in the sanctuary, he understood that God was at the center of all things, and he gained a fresh appreciation of both God and eternity.
- By hearing the word of God in the sanctuary, he understood that there was a truth that went beyond what he saw and experienced in everyday life.
- By observing sacrifice at the sanctuary, he understood that God takes sin so seriously that it must be judged and atoned for, even if it is by an innocent victim who stands in the place of the guilty by faith.

iii. This is one of God's great purposes in establishing a *place* where His people come to meet with Him. It is never to imply that there is only one or only a few places where man can meet with God, or that they must be ornate or glorious buildings. It is to emphasize that it is good to have a place separate from other places where we focus on a heavenly, eternal perspective.

iv. For Asaph, this was **the sanctuary of God**. It was the temple in Jerusalem, or the tabernacle that existed before the temple. For us, it is the place where we meet with God's people for worship and fellowship and hearing the word of God.

v. When Asaph went to **the sanctuary of God**, he received *understanding*. It wasn't only a place to impact the senses and the feelings, but the *understanding* of a man. Asaph didn't remark on how he *felt* their end or even *experienced* their end; he **understood their end**. It isn't a bad thing to feel and experience the right things in the house of God, but there must also be *understanding* – the communication of truth in ways that can be received.

vi. When Asaph went to **the sanctuary of God**, it only did him good because he connected with *eternity*, something that made him understand **the end** of the wicked. He didn't need to go to the house of God to hear about the news of the day or the same talk one would hear in the marketplace or the business office. Asaph needed the ultimate relevance, the relevance of eternity.

vii. "*Their end* is literally 'their afterward', their future which will unmake everything they have lived for." (Kidner)

2. (18-20) *The unsafe place of the wicked.*

Surely You set them in slippery places;

You cast them down to destruction.

Oh, how they are *brought* to desolation, as in a moment!

They are utterly consumed with terrors.

As a dream when *one* awakes,

So, Lord, when You awake,

You shall despise their image.

a. **Surely You set them in slippery places:** This is part of the understanding Asaph gained in the house of the Lord. He understood that the ease and security of the wicked was really only an illusion, and they were actually **set...in slippery places**, ready to fall at any time.

i. Earlier in the psalm, Asaph worried that his feet had almost slipped (verse 2). Now, with a perspective gained from the house of the Lord, he sees that the *wicked* are the ones **in slippery places**.

ii. "Sinner you may fall *now*, at once. The mountain yields beneath your feet, the slippery ice is melting every moment. Look down and learn your speedy doom. Yonder yawning gulf must soon receive you, while we look after you with hopeless tears. Our prayers cannot follow you; from your slippery standing place you fall and you are gone for ever. *Death* makes the place where you stand slippery, for it dissolves your life every hour. Time makes it slippery, for every instant it cuts the ground from under your feet. The *vanities* which you enjoy make your place slippery, for they are all like ice which shall melt before the sun. You have no foot-hold, sinner, you have no sure hope, no confidence. It is a melting thing you trust to." (Spurgeon)

b. **Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment:** Asaph could only understand this with the *eternal* perspective brought to him at the house of the Lord. In daily life he could only see what worked well for the wicked; with an eternal perspective he saw their **destruction**, their **desolation**, their **terrors**.

i. Earlier in the psalm, we had the feeling that Asaph would gladly trade places with the wicked man who seemed to be blessed. After gaining this eternal

perspective, we see that Asaph would *never* trade places with them. Who wants **destruction, desolation, and terrors**?

c. **As a dream when one awakes:** With an eternal perspective from the house of God, Asaph understood that the good life of the ungodly is really as fragile as a dream, and they will soon wake to the reality of the **destruction, desolation, and terrors** that are their portion.

i. "Their happiness is like that in a dream, wherein a man seems to be highly pleased and transported with ravishing delights, but when he awakes he finds himself deceived and unsatisfied." (Poole)

ii. "Let them flaunt their little hour, poor unsubstantial sons of dreams; they will soon be gone; when the day breaketh, and the Lord awakes as a mighty man out of his sleep, they will vanish away. Who cares for the wealth of dreamland? Who indeed but fools?" (Spurgeon)

d. **So, Lord, when You awake:** Asaph admitted that it *seemed* as if God were asleep because one could not always see His active hand of judgment against the wicked. Using this idea, Asaph knew that God would not always sleep in His patience toward the wicked, and one day He would **awake** and judge them; He would **despise their image**.

3. (21-24) *Confessing foolishness and receiving guidance.*

**Thus my heart was grieved,
And I was vexed in my mind.
I was so foolish and ignorant;
I was *like* a beast before You.
Nevertheless I *am* continually with You;
You hold *me* by my right hand.**

**You will guide me with Your counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory.**

a. **Thus my heart was grieved.... I was so foolish and ignorant:** Asaph confessed before the Lord his sinful lack of understanding before he went into the house of the Lord. He felt **foolish** that he had forgotten the obvious truths of eternity and God's justice.

b. **I was like a beast before You:** Asaph rightly observed that animals seem to have no concept of eternity. They live their lives for momentary pleasures, satisfying natural urges. When Asaph forgot about eternity, he was truly **like a beast before** God.

i. "Hebrew, *beasts*, which may signify a great beast; a most stupid and sottish creature, like one not only void of grace, but of reason too.... I minded only present things, as the brutes do." (Poole)

ii. "This was as far as Job got in his struggles with Asaph's question. For when God finished interrogating Job, Job confessed that God's ways were entirely beyond his understanding, and he despised his pride and repented." (Boice)

c. **Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand:** Asaph here declared both that *he* was **with** God, and that *God* was with him. It wasn't enough for Asaph to know and to say that God was with him; he also had to confess that he was with God.

d. **You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory:** With the new perspective gained at the house of the Lord, Asaph knew that God would **guide** him in this life and ultimately **receive** him **to glory**.

- i. Significantly, Asaph expected God to **guide** him with His **counsel**. He expected to hear God's wisdom and receive guidance through it. He didn't expect to be guided primarily through feelings, circumstances, or experiences, but to be guided through **counsel**.
- ii. Asaph had the faithful expectation of an **afterward** of **glory**. This is a deliberate contrast with the *end* of the wicked mentioned in verses 17-19. As a godly man, Asaph has his **afterward** and the wicked will have quite another.

4. (25-28) *The glory of a heavenly hope.*

Whom have I in heaven *but* You ?

And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You.

My flesh and my heart fail;

***But* God *is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish;

You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.

But *it is* good for me to draw near to God;

I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,

That I may declare all Your works.

a. **Whom have I in heaven but You?** This is the beautiful expression of a longing heart for God and for eternity. Intellectually, Asaph probably understood that there was much for him in heaven. There were angels and dwelling places and streets of gold and the companionship of the people of God throughout all generations. Yet all of that paled in the light of the presence of God.

- i. "There is none in heaven, with all its stars and angels, enough for thee but Him." (Maclaren)

ii. "Let sinners have an earthly prosperity, I am satisfied with thee, and with thy favour. Since thou givest me support and conduct here, and carriest me safe from hence to eternal glory, what do I need more? Or what can I desire more?" (Poole)

iii. Boice notes, "Verse 25 is a particularly fine expression and has been a blessing to many over the ages. Charles Wesley (1707-1788), the great Methodist hymn writer, was thinking about it on his deathbed and actually composed a hymn based on it as his final testimony. Calling his wife to him, he dictated:

'In age and feebleness extreme,
What shall a sinful worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;
O, could I catch a smile from thee,
And drop into eternity.'"

b. **And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You:** For Asaph, God was not only a heavenly hope but an earthly desire as well. God was both his inheritance in heaven and his earthly **desire**.

c. **My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever:** Asaph recognized both his weakness and the strength of God, and the *enduring character* of God's strength.

i. "In ancient Israel the priests enjoyed a privileged status of having the Lord as their 'share' and 'inheritance' (Num 18:20). Though they were denied the privilege of land ownership, they, along with the Levites, were taken care of by the Lord's tithes and offerings." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Allusion is here made to the division of the promised land. I ask no inheritance below; I look for one above." (Clarke)

d. Indeed, those who are far from You shall perish:

Asaph no longer had doubts about the destiny of the ungodly. With the eternal perspective gained at the house of the Lord, he understood that they would indeed **perish**.

i. "No human spirit that is not *united* to God can be saved. *Those who are FAR FROM THEE shall perish* – they shall be *lost, undone, ruined*; and that without remedy. Being *separated from God* by sin, they shall never be *rejoined*; the great gulf must be between them and their Maker *eternally*." (Clarke)

e. It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works:

It is staggering to see how much good Asaph's visit to the house of the Lord did for him. It gave him understanding and an eternal perspective.

i. He saw the great benefit in drawing near to God, which he doubted before (verse 13). "It may seem good in the worldling's eyes to go his way to his wine cups, and to make merry in the dance; it may seem good to yonder truster in an arm of flesh, to seek out his friends and his kinsmen, and entrust his case to their discretion; it may seem good to the desponding to retire in melancholy to brood over his sorrows, and to the dissipated, to endeavor to drown all care in vanity, but to me, says the psalmist, it is good, preeminently good, that I should draw near unto God." (Spurgeon)

ii. He saw the value of putting his trust in God, now understanding that God was reliable and could be trusted.

iii. He had a passion to **declare all** God's **works**. He would become a messenger of God's goodness and of the eternal perspective he gained in the house of the Lord.

Arise, O God, Defend Your Cause

Psa 74:1 Why have you abandoned us like this, O God? Will you be angry with your own people forever?

Psa 74:2 Remember your people, whom you chose for yourself long ago, whom you brought out of slavery to be your own tribe. Remember Mount Zion, where once you lived.

Psa 74:3 Walk over these total ruins; our enemies have destroyed everything in the Temple.

Psa 74:4 Your enemies have shouted in triumph in your Temple; they have placed their flags there as signs of victory.

Psa 74:5 They looked like woodsmen cutting down trees with their axes.

Psa 74:6 They smashed all the wooden panels with their axes and sledge hammers.

Psa 74:7 They wrecked your Temple and set it on fire; they desecrated the place where you are worshiped.

Psa 74:8 They wanted to crush us completely; they burned down every holy place in the land.

Psa 74:9 All our sacred symbols are gone; there are no prophets left, and no one knows how long this will last.

Psa 74:10 How long, O God, will our enemies laugh at you? Will they insult your name forever?

Psa 74:11 Why have you refused to help us? Why do you keep your hands behind you?

Psa 74:12 But you have been our king from the beginning, O God; you have saved us many times.

Psa 74:13 With your mighty strength you divided the sea and smashed the heads of the sea monsters;

Psa 74:14 you crushed the heads of the monster Leviathan and fed his body to desert animals.

Psa 74:15 You made springs and fountains flow; you dried up large rivers.

Psa 74:16 You created the day and the night; you set the sun and the moon in their places;

Psa 74:17 you set the limits of the earth; you made summer and winter.

Psa 74:18 But remember, O LORD, that your enemies laugh at you, that they are godless and despise you.

Psa 74:19 Don't abandon your helpless people to their cruel enemies; don't forget your persecuted people!

Psa 74:20 Remember the covenant you made with us. There is violence in every dark corner of the land.

Psa 74:21 Don't let the oppressed be put to shame; let those poor and needy people praise you.

Psa 74:22 Rouse yourself, God, and defend your cause! Remember that godless people laugh at you all day long.

Psa 74:23 Don't forget the angry shouts of your enemies, the continuous noise made by your foes.

Psalms 74:1-23

Psalms 74 – Asking God to Remember His Destroyed Sanctuary

*This psalm is titled **A Contemplation of Asaph**. It is a plea and a prayer in great sorrow from the destruction of the sanctuary (Psa 74:3; Psa 74:7). The majority of commentators believe this psalm followed the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians. Some argue that it is even later, following the desecration of the temple in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. If these later dates are true, this*

Asaph is not the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era, unless **Asaph** composed this psalm prophetically, which was possible according to 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30.

James Montgomery Boice explains the thinking of a later Asaph: "Either this is a later Asaph, which is not unlikely since the name might have been perpetuated among the temple musicians, or, more likely, the name was affixed to many psalms produced by this body of musicians. We know that the 'descendants of Asaph' were functioning as late as the reign of Josiah (2Ch 35:15)."

There is another option: the Asaph of David and Solomon's time composed this psalm on the occasion or the memory of the destruction of the tabernacle in Shiloh (1 Samuel 4). The word sanctuary used in Psa 74:3; Psa 74:7 is also used of the tabernacle (Exo 25:8; Lev 12:4; Lev 21:12; Num 10:21; Num 18:1).

A. The plea for help when the sanctuary is destroyed.

1. (1-2) Asking God to remember His people.

O God, why have You cast us off forever?

Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?

Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old,

The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed—

This Mount Zion where You have dwelt.

a. **O God, why have You cast us off forever?** Asaph lived and served during the reigns of David and Solomon, which were generally times of security and blessing for Israel. Yet even within those generally good times, there were occasions of difficulty in the face of Israel's enemies. Asaph wrote during such a season, or possibly

with such a difficult time in mind. He wrote of the terrible sense that God had **cast us off forever** and is no longer *for us*.

i. This is a desperate psalm, yet “this is not the song of an atheist, but the wail of a believer.” (Morgan)

ii. “It is faith, more than doubt, that precipitates the shower of questions which begins and ends this half of the psalm.” (Kidner)

iii. “The questioner asks how God can be angry with his own people forever. He does not question the correctness of his judgment but uses the question and the lament as the basis for an appeal to God’s fatherly heart.” (VanGemeren)

iv. “When the heart is hot and restless, and it seems as though God had forsaken His own, he is a wise man who turns to God in song, even though the song be only a complaint.” (Morgan)

b. Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? It wasn’t just that Asaph felt that God had stopped caring for Israel (**cast us off**). Added to that was the sense that God was *angry* at them, and in some sense working *against* them.

i. “This is a fierce complaint, bordering just possibly on impropriety as an address to God. When we complain it is more often the case that we just complain, either to ourselves or to other people. It is better to complain to God.” (Boice)

c. Remember Your congregation: From such despair Asaph asked God to change His apparent attitude toward Israel. It seems clear that Asaph understood that God’s indifference and anger was more in appearance than in fact; otherwise, the following appeals would be of no use.

- Asaph asked God to **remember** that Israel belonged to Him, and was His **congregation**.
- Asaph asked God to remember that Israel was His **purchased** people, bought out of the slave market of the nations.
- Asaph asked God to remember that Israel was His **inheritance**, His valued treasure.
- Asaph asked God to remember that He had **purchased** and **redeemed** Israel, and that from times of **old**.
- Asaph asked God to remember that He had **dwelt** among His people in Jerusalem (**Mount Zion**) in a special way.

i. We sense that Asaph thought, "If God would only **remember** His special care and connection with Israel, He would rescue us." He therefore brought many reasons and appeals to God in prayer.

ii. "Pleading is wrestling: arguments are the grips, the feints, the throes, the struggles with which we hold and vanquish the covenant angel. The humble statement of our wants is not without its value, but to be able to give reasons and arguments why God should hear us is to offer potent, prevalent prayer." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Which You have purchased:** "What a mighty plea is redemption. O God, canst thou see the bloodmark on thine own sheep, and yet allow grievous wolves to devour them?" (Spurgeon)

iv. Poole believed that **the tribe of Your inheritance** referred to "the tribe of Judah, which thou hast in a special manner chosen for thine inheritance, and for the seat of the kingdom, and for the birth of the Messiah. And thus here is an elegant gradation from

the general to particulars; first the *congregation*, consisting of all the tribes; then the *tribe* of Judah."

2. (3-7) *The destruction of the sanctuary.*

Lift up Your feet to the perpetual desolations.

The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary.

Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place;

They set up their banners *for* signs.

They seem like men who lift up

Axes among the thick trees.

And now they break down its carved work, all at once,

With axes and hammers.

They have set fire to Your sanctuary;

They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground.

a. **Lift up Your feet:** Asaph asked God to *run* to their aid, because the sanctuary – the tabernacle or temple – had been invaded and ransacked. He hoped this would give God reason to move quickly for Israel's good.

i. "God is represented as having withdrawn himself, and departed afar off; he is therefore entreated to return without delay, to view the long-lasting desolations of the once highly favoured city." (Horne)

ii. We have no indication of the tabernacle or the temple being so abused by Israel's enemies in the days of David or Solomon. Not long before David's time, the tabernacle was overrun and ransacked at Shiloh when Eli was high priest (1 Samuel 4). There are a few different ways to explain Asaph's description of these **perpetual desolations**.

- Asaph wrote of the catastrophe at Shiloh described in 1 Samuel 4, either being alive at that time or writing in the memory of it.

- Asaph wrote prophetically of a catastrophe that was still in the future.

- The Asaph who wrote this psalm was not the same Asaph associated with the reigns of David and Solomon, or this psalm came from his “school” and was written many years later.

- iii. Among the far less likely possibilities are the suggestions that Asaph had only a symbolic sanctuary in mind, or that there was a devastating attack on the tabernacle or temple in the days of David and Solomon that was not recorded.

b. Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place: Asaph asked God to defend *His* sanctuary, *His* tent of meeting. Those who oppose God had come **with axes and hammers** to destroy, and **have set fire to Your sanctuary** – and they destroy with furious energy.

- i. **Your enemies roar:** “Instead of hearing the priestly benediction (Num 6:24-26), they heard the roaring of enemy voices.” (VanGemeren)

- ii. **They set up their banners up for signs:** “The *signs* would be the military ensigns (*cf.* the same word in Num 2:2).” (Kidner)

- iii. “As a Jew felt a holy horror when he saw an idolatrous emblem set up in the holy place, even so do we...when from pulpits, once occupied by men of God, we hear philosophy and vain deceit.” (Spurgeon)

- iv. **With axes and hammers they have set fire to Your sanctuary:** Spurgeon thought of how modern critics try to destroy the church today. Their use of pretended objectivity and love of truth, ridicule, and debating tricks are like the **axes and hammers** that destroy a beautiful building made unto God’s glory.

3. (8-9) *The destruction of places and prophets.*

**They said in their hearts,
“Let us destroy them altogether.”
They have burned up all the meeting places of God in
the land.
We do not see our signs;
There is no longer any prophet;
Nor is there any among us who knows how long.**

a. **Let us destroy them altogether:** Having successfully attacked the sanctuary of God, the enemies of the Lord wanted to **destroy** the people of God **altogether**. They hoped to do this when they **burned up all the meeting places of God in the land**.

i. The synagogue did not exist as an established institution until the Babylonian captivity. Yet it seems likely that there were **meeting places of God** throughout the land of Israel. When Israel was obedient, these were not places of sacrifice but places of prayer and hearing of the Scriptures. The Levites were commanded to teach Israelites the Scriptures (Deu 17:9-12; Deu 33:10; Lev 10:8-11). It makes sense that there might have been **meeting places of God** in many communities even before the synagogue became an established institution.

ii. “It is supposed that there were no synagogues in the land till after the Babylonish captivity. How then could the Chaldeans burn up any in Judea? The word *moadey*, which we translate *synagogues*, may be taken in a more general sense, and mean *any places* where *religious assemblies* were held: and that such places and assemblies did exist long *before* the Babylonian captivity, is pretty evident from different parts of Scripture.” (Clarke)

iii. “Although there was only one place appointed for Israel’s worship, because it alone housed the altar for

the appointed burnt sacrifices, and although the formation of formal synagogues seems to date from a later time, there must, as Perowne says, 'surely have been some public worship beyond the limits of the family, and if so, houses for its celebration.'" (Boice)

b. We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet: The enemies of God and His people succeeded in gravely damaging the spiritual life of Israel.

i. In saying **no longer any prophet** and **any among us**, Poole thought this was some poetic hyperbole. "It is not unusual in Scripture, to say that there is none of a sort of persons or things, when there is a very great scarcity of them." (Poole)

ii. "Our problem is not an absence of God's Word or God's teachers. Our problem is that we do not value this Word. We do not cherish it and study it. We do not memorize its important passages. Instead we allow countless lesser things (like television) to take the Bible's place." (Boice)

4. (10-11) How long?

O God, how long will the adversary reproach?

Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?

Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?

Take it out of Your bosom and destroy them.

a. O God, how long will the adversary reproach?

Asaph saw the destruction of the spiritual institutions and life of Israel, and with heart and logic he asked how long this low and afflicted state would last.

b. Why do You withdraw Your hand? Asaph did not lose confidence in the power or ability of God. He knew that if God put forth His hand of power against these enemies, He would **destroy them**.

B. The demonstration of God's great power.

1. (12-17) Remembering the greatness of God.

**For God is my King from of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
You divided the sea by Your strength;
You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters.
You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces,
And gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
You broke open the fountain and the flood;
You dried up mighty rivers.
The day is Yours, the night also is Yours;
You have prepared the light and the sun.
You have set all the borders of the earth;
You have made summer and winter.**

a. **God is my King from of old:** Asaph meditated first on the royal authority of God and then upon His great power. The same God who **divided the sea by His strength** could rescue His people in the present crisis.

i. "Things could hardly be worse to the eyes of sight. Then came the declaration of what the eyes of faith beheld. In spite of all these apparent contradictions, God was seen as King, working for salvation." (Morgan)

ii. "The man of faith is never blind to the desolation. He sees clearly all the terrible facts. But He sees more. He sees God. Therefore his last word is never desolation: it is rather salvation." (Morgan)

b. **You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters:** In several places the Bible mentions **sea serpents** and **Leviathan**, and often in the context of creation. Usually **Leviathan** is considered to be a sea-

monster or dragon that terrorized sailors and fishermen. Some consider these **sea serpents** and **Leviathan** real in history; others consider them to be legendary.

i. Most commentators see here remembrance of deliverance from Egypt (**You divided the sea**), and the references to **sea serpents** and **Leviathan** to be poetic references to Egypt. Yet this hymn of praise seems to have more references to creation (**day** and **night, light** and the **sun**). One can also see this as connected to creation rather than to the Exodus.

ii. In the ancient Middle East, there were many popular legends about the gods who combated different hostile deities in order to create the earth. Biblical authors showed that Yahweh is the hero. It is Yahweh who **divided the sea**, even though ancient legends said that Tiamat (the Deep) was the chaotic goddess defeated by the hero god Marduk (Bel), or Yam (the Sea) who was defeated by Baal. It is Yahweh who **broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces**, not Marduk or Baal.

iii. "The point here is that what Baal had claimed in the realm of myth, God had done in the realm of history – and done for His people, *working salvation*." (Kidner)

iv. "The psalmist chose the language of Canaanite mythology to celebrate Yahweh's victory over the nations." (VanGemeren)

v. The name **Leviathan** means "*twisting one*" and is also used in many interesting places in Scripture.

- Psa 74:12-14 refers to Leviathan as a sea serpent, and relates that God broke the head of the Leviathan long ago, perhaps at creation.

- Psa 104:26 also refers to Leviathan as a sea creature.
- Isa 27:1 speaks of the *future* defeat of Leviathan, also associating it with a *twisted serpent* that lives *in the sea*.
- Isa 51:9 and Psa 89:8-10 speak of a serpent associated with the sea that God defeated as a demonstration of His great strength, and identifies this serpent with the name *Rahab*, meaning *proud one*.
- Job 26:12-13 also refers to God's piercing defeat of a fleeing serpent associated with the sea.

iv. Satan is often represented as a dragon or a serpent (Genesis 3; Revelation 12, 13) and the sea is thought of as a dangerous or threatening place in the Jewish mind (Isa 57:20; Mar 4:39; Rev 21:1). It's possible that Leviathan is another serpent-like manifestation of Satan, whose resistance to creation was overcome.

v. It is important to note that the Hebrew Scriptures do not simply believe or adopt this Canaanite mythology; they take it and transform it, using it to exalt Yahweh in a way that the Canaanite myths never did. Elmer B. Smick notes this in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* on Job: "Here the sea that God subdues is not the deity Yam. Job depersonalized Yam by using the definite article (the sea), thus expressing his innate monotheistic theology.... Further, by his own wisdom, skill, and power he 'cut Rahab to pieces' and 'pierced the gliding serpent,' unlike Marduk who depended on the enablement of the father-gods."

c. **You broke open the fountain and the flood:** Asaph recounted examples of God's power and authority over

nature. God has power over the waters, over **day** and **night**, and over all the seasons.

i. **You**: "The sevenfold repetition of the word brings forcibly into view the Divine personality and former deeds which pledge God to act now." (Maclaren)

2. (18-21) *Asking God to remember and respect His covenant.*

Remember this, *that* the enemy has reproached, O LORD,

And *that* a foolish people has blasphemed Your name. Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast!

Do not forget the life of Your poor forever.

Have respect to the covenant;

For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty.

Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed!

Let the poor and needy praise Your name.

a. **Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O LORD**: After declaring the unmatched power of God, Asaph then called upon God to take vengeance upon His enemies and to protect His people (**do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast**).

i. **Your turtledove**: "Fitly compared to a turtle-dove, because of the great resemblance of their dispositions and conditions, being simple, and harmless, and meek, and faithful, and mournful, and exposed to manifold injuries, and unable to defend itself from them." (Poole)

b. **Have respect to the covenant**: Asaph wisely and persuasively called upon God to act in view of His **covenant** with His people. In a dangerous world, **full of**

the haunts of cruelty, God's people could rely on God's covenant promise.

i. "That which he mainly urgeth is the covenant, that hive of heavenly honey, as one calleth it." (Trapp)

ii. "In every trial, when desiring any blessing, when the crushing blows of the adversaries' hatchet are heard, turn to God, and say, 'Have respect unto the covenant, of which Jesus is the Mediator and his blood the seal.'" (Meyer)

3. (22-23) *Asking God to act in His own cause.*

**Arise, O God, plead Your own cause;
Remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily.
Do not forget the voice of Your enemies;
The tumult of those who rise up against You
increases continually.**

a. **Arise, O God, plead Your own cause:** Asaph approached God with concern for *His own cause*. He asked God to act not only out of compassion for His people, but also out of concern for His glory, to rebuke **the foolish man** who **reproaches You daily**.

i. "The Lord is begged to remember that he is himself reproached, and that by a mere man – that man a fool, and he is also reminded that these foul reproaches are incessant, and repeated with every revolving day. It is bravely done when faith can pluck pleas out of the dragon's mouth, and out of the blasphemies of fools find arguments with God." (Spurgeon)

b. **The tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually:** Asaph pressed the *urgency* of the plea. With wickedness on the increase, there was more reason for God to act sooner rather than later.

God Will Judge with Equity

Psa 75:1 We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks to you! We proclaim how great you are and tell of the wonderful things you have done.

Psa 75:2 "I have set a time for judgment," says God, "and I will judge with fairness.

Psa 75:3 Though every living creature tremble and the earth itself be shaken, I will keep its foundations firm.

Psa 75:4 I tell the wicked not to be arrogant;

Psa 75:5 I tell them to stop their boasting."

Psa 75:6 Judgment does not come from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south;

Psa 75:7 it is God who is the judge, condemning some and acquitting others.

Psa 75:8 The LORD holds a cup in his hand, filled with the strong wine of his anger. He pours it out, and all the wicked drink it; they drink it down to the last drop.

Psa 75:9 But I will never stop speaking of the God of Jacob or singing praises to him.

Psa 75:10 He will break the power of the wicked, but the power of the righteous will be increased.

Psalms 75:1-10

Psalms 75 – The Righteous Judge Exalts and Brings Low

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."** A Psalm of Asaph. A Song. Some suppose **the Chief Musician** to be the Lord GOD Himself, and others suppose the reference to be a leader of choirs or musicians, such as Heman the singer (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 25:6). The tune **Do Not Destroy** was also used in the Davidic Psalms 57, 58, , 59. The author **Asaph** was the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 2Ch 29:13). 1Ch 25:1 and*

2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.

A. God's rebuke of the proud.

1. (1) *Thanks to the God who is near.*

We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!

For Your wondrous works declare *that* Your name is near.

a. **We give thanks:** Asaph wrote this from the perspective of the congregation; they together say **we give thanks** unto God, and the thought is repeated for emphasis. The people of God gladly **give thanks** unto their God.

i. "We should praise God again and again. Stinted gratitude is ingratitude. For infinite goodness there should be measureless thanks." (Spurgeon)

b. **For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near:** Their gratitude toward God had a basis, a reason. They gave thanks to God not only for His **wondrous works**, but for what those works proclaimed: that God, in all His character and attributes (**Your name**), was **near** to His people.

i. We are grateful for God's great works among us, but not only for the works themselves. They are constant reminders of the love, goodness, mercy, and wisdom of God toward and among His people. It is also a wonderful thing to know and experience that His **name is near**.

ii. "The *name of God* is said to be *near*, because it had come into public notice, and was in every mind and every tongue – opposed to what is *unknown* and *obscure*, which is said to be far remote." (Venema, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "The reason for rejoicing lies in the manifest presence of God proclaimed and celebrated in the stories of God's mighty acts. In remembrance and retelling of the history of salvation lies the comforting affirmation of God's closeness to his people." (VanGemeren)

iv. "God's *name* is part of His self-giving: a revelation of who He is (Exo 34:14-15) and an invitation to call upon Him (Act 2:21)." (Kidner)

2. (2-3) *God speaks of His judgment.*

**"When I choose the proper time,
I will judge uprightly.
The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved;
I set up its pillars firmly. Selah**

a. **When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly:** The previous lines of the psalm were spoken from the perspective of God's people. These are spoken from the perspective of God Himself. God declares that He **will judge**, and that He will **judge uprightly**. As Abraham understood, the Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen 18:25).

b. **When I choose the proper time:** In His judgments God reserves the right to **choose the proper time**. We often feel that *we know* the proper time for God's judgments, and we are often troubled because God does not seem to share our perspective. The believer should have a humble trust in the uprightness of God's judgments *and* the **proper time** for them.

i. This "reveals the time and the method of the Divine activity. His time is 'the set time.' That is, He acts, never too soon and never too late. It is a great word." (Morgan)

ii. "If judgment were left in our hands, we would probably let it flash out against anything that displeases us whenever we see it. But God lets evil go unchecked sometimes for a rather long time, knowing that he has appointed a proper time when it will be brought down." (Boice)

c. **The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved:** God declared the great power of His judgments. At His judgments people and things are either **dissolved** or they are established **firmly**.

i. "There may be apparent and indeed very real dissolution of all human organization and order; but the true pillars of the earth are God-established and cannot be broken down. This conviction is the citadel of the soul." (Morgan)

d. **Selah:** The rightness, the timing, and the power of God's judgments are all worthy of our deep consideration.

3. (4-5) *God speaks to the proud.*

**"I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,'
And to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn.
Do not lift up your horn on high;
Do not speak with a stiff neck.'"**

a. **Do not deal boastfully:** From the previous lines of the psalm, it is best to regard this as Asaph recording God's words from His own perspective. In light of His great judgments, God warned the proud (**the boastful**) to no longer boast and exalt their own strength (**lift up the horn**).

i. "Lifting one's horn against heaven is the equivalent of shaking one's fist in God's face." (Boice)

ii. **Horn on high:** "A metaphor from untamed and stiff-necked oxen, which will not bow their heads to

receive the yoke, but lift up their heads and horns to avoid it." (Poole)

b. **Do not speak with a stiff neck:** The figure of the **stiff neck** was taken from the world of agriculture, where ox or cattle might resist the yoke for plowing and other work. God cautioned the proud and wicked not to resist Him in the same way.

i. "Impudence before God is madness. The out-stretched neck of insolent pride is sure to provoke his axe. Those who carry their heads high shall find that they will be lifted yet higher, as Haman was upon the gallows which he had prepared for the righteous man." (Spurgeon)

B. Reasons for humility.

1. (6-7) *Be humble because promotion comes from God.*

**For exaltation comes neither from the east
Nor from the west nor from the south.
But God is the Judge:
He puts down one,
And exalts another.**

a. **Exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west:** Asaph hoped to teach the proud ones whom he warned in the previous lines. They should first know that their **exaltation**, their success and standing did not come from earth and human initiative. They should stop their proud confidence in self.

i. "Ambitionists used to look this way and that way how to advance themselves, but all in vain." (Trapp)

ii. "The word '*promotion*' [**exaltation**] here is used in a very expressive way; it means the *desire of self-advancement*, (*harim*), and would teach us that all our inward schemes, and outward plans, cannot gain

for us advancement, unless based upon the fear and love of God.” (Bateman, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **But God is the Judge:** Every successful person, everyone exalted in some way, should humbly look to God with gratitude. It is God who **puts down one, and exalts another**. A humble mind and heart is the proper response, instead of boastful words, the celebration of one’s own strength, or resistance against God.

i. “Promotions in any direction, to positions of credit, influence, or consideration, are the gift and the work of God.” (Meyer)

ii. This is not to say that hard work, preparation, good habits, and other human aspects do not contribute to success – they clearly do. Yet even those things are gifts and abilities from God and should be regarded with humility and gratitude toward Him.

iii. “Empires rise and fall at his bidding. A dungeon here, and there a throne, his will assigns. Assyria yields to Babylon, and Babylon, to the Medes. Kings are but puppets in his hand; they serve his purpose when they rise and when they fall.” (Spurgeon)

2. (8-9) *Be humble because the wicked will be judged even as the righteous praise.*

**For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup,
And the wine is red;
It is fully mixed, and He pours it out;
Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth
Drain *and* drink down.
But I will declare forever,
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.**

a. **In the hand of the LORD there is a cup:** Asaph here used the **cup** as a figure of God’s judgment. The idea is that God demonstrates His judgment upon **the**

wicked, and they are forced to **drain and drink down** the bitter cup.

i. "There is a grim contrast between the images of festivity and hospitality called up by the picture of a host presenting the wine cup to his guests, and the stern compulsion which makes the 'wicked' gulp down the nauseous draught held by God to their reluctant lips." (Maclaren)

ii. "They scoffed his feast of love; they shall be dragged to his table of justice, and made to drink their due deserts." (Spurgeon)

iii. "They who have drunk so willingly and freely of the cup of sin, shall be forced, whether they will or no, to drink the cup of judgment. And it is not a sip or two shall serve their turns; they must drink all, dregs and all, they shall drink it to the bottom, and yet they shall never come to the bottom; they have loved long draughts, and now they shall have one long enough; there is eternity to the bottom." (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. **Fully mixed**: "*Well mixed* is a reference to the spices which might be added for pungency; so New English Bible, 'hot with spice'." (Kidner)

b. **I will sing praises to the God of Jacob**: In contrast to **the wicked of the earth**, Asaph spoke for the people of God who **declare** and *rejoice* in the judgments of God.

3. (10) *Be humble because God Himself will bring the wicked low and raise the righteous high.*

**"All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off,
But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."**

a. **All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off**:
The symbol of the horn was used earlier in this psalm

(verses 4-5) in the familiar sense as an expression of strength and domination (as with ox or cattle). This psalm ends with another word from God's own perspective, vowing to put down the proud and wicked one (as earlier in verse 7).

i. **The horns of the wicked:** "Their honour and power, which they made an instrument of mischief to oppress good men. A metaphor from horned and mischievous beasts." (Poole)

b. **The horns of the righteous shall be exalted:** God's work of judgment is not only *against* the proud and wicked; it is also *for* **the righteous**. As surely as He will **cut off** the arrogant pride of the wicked, He will also **exalt** the strength of the righteous.

i. "All their *power* and *influence*, will I cut off; and will exalt and extend the *power* of the righteous." (Clarke)

Who Can Stand Before You?

Psa 76:1 God is known in Judah; his name is honored in Israel.

Psa 76:2 He has his home in Jerusalem; he lives on Mount Zion.

Psa 76:3 There he broke the arrows of the enemy, their shields and swords, yes, all their weapons.

Psa 76:4 How glorious you are, O God! How majestic, as you return from the mountains where you defeated your foes.

Psa 76:5 Their brave soldiers have been stripped of all they had and now are sleeping the sleep of death; all their strength and skill was useless.

Psa 76:6 When you threatened them, O God of Jacob, the horses and their riders fell dead.

Psa 76:7 But you, LORD, are feared by all. No one can stand in your presence when you are angry.

Psa 76:8 You made your judgment known from heaven; the world was afraid and kept silent,

Psa 76:9 when you rose up to pronounce judgment, to save all the oppressed on earth.

Psa 76:10 Human anger only results in more praise for you; those who survive the wars will keep your festivals.

Psa 76:11 Give the LORD your God what you promised him; bring gifts to him, all you nearby nations. God makes everyone fear him;

Psa 76:12 he humbles proud princes and terrifies great kings.

Psalms 76:1-12

Psalms 76 – The Greatness of God and Man’s Proper Response

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.** Asaph was the great singer and musician of David and Solomon’s era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 2Ch 29:13). 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.*

This psalm celebrates a great victory of God on behalf of His people, and those who connect it with the defeat of Sennacherib (Isa 37:36) attribute Psalms 76 to a later Asaph, or to someone who was the literal or spiritual descendant of the Asaph of David and Solomon’s time.

A. God’s might shown in Zion.

1. (1-3) The greatness of God in Zion.

In Judah God *is* known;

His name *is* great in Israel.

In Salem also is His tabernacle,

**And His dwelling place in Zion.
There He broke the arrows of the bow,
The shield and sword of battle. Selah**

a. **In Judah God is known:** Asaph happily proclaimed that God was **known** in Judah and that **His name is great in Israel**. God would get the praise due to Him among His people.

i. We notice that **God is known**, that He has revealed Himself. God is knowable, and our knowledge of God is not only subjective. We do not worship an unknown god as the ancient Athenians did (Act 17:23).

ii. We notice that **in Judah God is known**. The nations had their ideas of deity, but the true revelation of God came through the Jewish people – the covenant descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. “In those days, if you wanted to know who God was and what he was like, you had to turn to the Jews and their Bible.” (Boice)

b. **In Salem also is His tabernacle:** God has a further connection with Israel; it is in their land that He chose to make **His dwelling place** and to establish **His tabernacle**.

i. Asaph’s mention of the **tabernacle** might be a reference to history, or perhaps it is poetic. Yet it is more likely that the **tabernacle** was brought to **Salem**, to the city of **Zion**, when David brought the ark of the covenant there (2 Samuel 6).

ii. It seems that **Salem** was the ancient name for *Jerusalem* (Gen 14:18, Hebrew 7:1-2).

iii. “The Pilgrims also loved this psalm, and it was from verse 2 that they derived the name of one of the

very first settlements in the New World: Salem, Massachusetts." (Boice)

iv. The phrase **His dwelling place in Zion** uses an interesting word. "Not His 'abode' but His 'covert' or 'lair' is the bold expression here, with its tacit comparison of the Lord to a lion (cf. Jer 25:38, and see Psa 27:5)." (Kidner)

v. "This means that the picture of God in stanza one is of a lion crouching on Mount Zion, ready to pounce. In other words, he is to be reckoned with, to be feared." (Boice)

c. **There He broke the arrows of the bow:** Jerusalem became the center of Israel when David conquered the city and brought peace to the city of peace (2Sa 5:6-10). In many ways before and after, God breaks the weapons of those set against Him and His people.

i. Asaph spoke of a fearsome weapon, **the arrows of the bow**: "The *fiery arrows*. Arrows, round the heads of which inflammable matter was rolled, and then ignited, were used by the ancients, and shot into towns to set them on fire; and were discharged among the towers and wooden works of besiegers." (Clarke)

ii. God's ability to fight on behalf of His people "made the queen-mother of Scotland say, that she more feared the prayers of John Knox than an army of thirty thousand fighting soldiers. The king of Sweden, as soon as he set foot in Germany, fell down to prayer, and what great things did he in a little time!" (Trapp)

iii. "Like many of the fighting psalms, this too has been a favorite of Christians during religious warfare. The embattled Huguenots sang it as they marched

into battle at Cloigny. The Covenanters sang it at Drumclog in 1679 when they defeated the government troops of 'Bloody Claverhouse'.... Psalms 76 was sung in thanksgiving services marking the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588." (Boice)

iv. "While the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, God is the same in might; and while He is in the midst our defense is sure. No weapon formed against the trusting people can prosper." (Morgan)

2. (4-6) Praise to the triumphant God.

You are more glorious and excellent

Than the mountains of prey.

The stouthearted were plundered;

They have sunk into their sleep;

And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands.

At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,

Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep.

a. **You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey:** Asaph thought of the beauty and the bounty of the **mountains of prey**, the places remote and wild enough to be home to wild animals. He knew that the Lord God was **more glorious and excellent than** these beautiful places.

i. We imagine Asaph hiking in the high mountains where the goats and ibex and other wild animals live. He is stunned by their beauty, but goes on to think: *Our God is **more glorious and excellent than even these mountains.***

ii. "Thou art more illustrious and excellent than all the mountains of prey, i.e., where wild beasts wander,

and prey on those that are more helpless than themselves." (Clarke)

iii. The Septuagint gives an alternative reading of **mountains of prey**. "*The everlasting mountains* is a reading borrowed from the Septuagint, probably rightly, in place of the somewhat obscure 'mountains of prey' (King James Version, Revised Version)." (Kidner)

b. None of the mighty men have found the use of their hands: The God who is greater than the mountains also helped His people in battle. He helped them by confounding their enemies who were **sunk into their sleep**.

i. "The occasion that springs to mind here is the elimination of Sennacherib's army overnight by the angel of the Lord (Isa 37:36). The Septuagint brings in an allusion to it in its version of the title." (Kidner)

ii. **The stouthearted were plundered:** "They came to spoil, and lo! they are spoiled themselves. Their stout hearts are cold in death, the angel of the pestilence has dried up their life-blood, their very heart is taken from them." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep:** "The Israelites always had a special fear of horses and scythed chariots; and, therefore, the sudden stillness of the entire force of the enemy in this department is made the theme of special rejoicing." (Spurgeon)

B. Giving honor to the great God.

1. (7-9) The fear of the LORD.

**You, Yourself, are to be feared;
And who may stand in Your presence
When once You are angry?**

**You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared and was still,
When God arose to judgment,
To deliver all the oppressed of the earth. Selah**

a. **You, Yourself, are to be feared:** Asaph thought of the importance of giving honor and reverence – a healthy fear – to the great God. He emphasized the personal aspect of it – that God Himself is **to be feared**, more than the things He may do.

i. **You, Yourself are to be feared:** “The Hebrew is simple, but very emphatic: *attah nora attah*, ‘Thou art terrible; thou art.’ The repetition of the *pronoun* deepens the sense.” (Clarke)

b. **Who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry:** Our respect and reverence for God goes beyond admiration of His greatness. It is also connected to our knowledge of His righteousness, His power, and His authority as Judge. We understand that God is the best friend and the worst enemy.

c. **When God arose to judgment, to deliver all the oppressed of the earth:** God uses His righteous might not primarily to defend Himself, but to **deliver all the oppressed**. He cares about the poor and needy, and every wrong will be set right or recompensed when God rises **to judgment**.

i. “Note the purpose of *judgment*, which is *to save* those who commit their cause to God. This is the chief aspect of justice in the Psalms, where the plight of those who either cannot or will not hit back at the ruthless is a constant concern.” (Kidner)

2. (10-12) *Honoring the God who rules over all.*

**Surely the wrath of man shall praise You;
With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself.**

**Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay *them*;
Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him
who ought to be feared.
He shall cut off the spirit of princes;
He is awesome to the kings of the earth.**

a. **Surely the wrath of man shall praise You:** Asaph considered the judgments of God and how God uses His judgment to *deliver the oppressed* (verse 9). In this the psalmist sees the matchless wisdom and providence of God, who can work all things together so marvelously that He will make **the wrath of man** bring Him praise.

i. "Even the most hostile acts against his rule will bring him 'praise' (cf. Act 2:23; Rom 8:28)."
(VanGemenen)

ii. The Bible and history are filled with the fulfillment of this promise and principle. Haman was filled with wrath against Mordecai; God used the wrath of Haman to bring Himself praise. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were filled with wrath against God's own Son; God used the wrath of the religious leaders to bring Himself praise. We can see this principle fulfilled in history; by faith we should believe it to be so today when men show their wrath against God and His people.

iii. **The wrath of man** "shall not only be overcome but rendered subservient to thy glory. Man with his breath of threatening is but blowing the trumpet of the Lord's eternal fame." (Spurgeon)

iv. "This singer of the olden time had seen the wrath of man working havoc in human affairs, as we also have seen it. But he watched it closely, and he had seen God, surrounding all its activity by His own presence and holding it within His Own grasp, and so

compelling it at last to work towards His praise.”
(Morgan)

b. With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself: God will even *adorn* Himself with the “leftovers” of man’s wrath against Him and His people. This in no way justifies the wrath of man, but it does show the surpassing greatness of God.

i. Other translations give a different sense of this difficult Hebrew phrase.

- *And the survivors of your wrath are restrained* (NIV).
- *The residue of wrath thou wilt gird upon thee* (RSV).

ii. If the Hebrew text is to be understood in this sense, then the idea is that God promises to *restrain* the wrath of man. First comes the promise to bring good out of even the wrath of man, and then the promise is to *restrain* that wrath.

iii. “Then he had seen God, when the limit was reached, restrain this wrath, in the pictorial language of the singer, girding it upon Himself, and so preventing its further action under the will of man.”
(Morgan)

iv. “The wrath of man had been allowed up to a certain point, to bring into clear evidence the greater power of God; and then He had quietly put a term to its further manifestation.” (Meyer)

c. Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay them: Asaph brought a logical conclusion to the facts presented. If God is this great, then we owe our vows to *Him*, and vows made should be paid.

i. "To vow or not is a matter of choice, but to discharge our vows is our bounden duty. He who would defraud God, his own God, is a wretch indeed." (Spurgeon)

d. **Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him:** We can and should honor God with more than our vows. In humble submission we should **bring presents to Him**, giving to Him our first and our best.

i. "If such should have been the gratitude and devotion of Israelites, for a temporary deliverance from the fury of an earthly tyrant, how much higher ought that of Christians to rise, for eternal redemption from the great oppressor!" (Horne)

e. **He is awesome to the kings of the earth:** Even the **princes** and the **kings of the earth** can and should see the awe of this great God. They should keep their vows to Him and bring presents to honor Him. No one is excluded from the reverence and praise of the great God and King.

i. "None are great in his hand. Caesars and Napoleons fall under his power as the boughs of the tree beneath the woodman's axe." (Spurgeon)

In the Day of Trouble I Seek the Lord

Psa 77:1 I cry aloud to God; I cry aloud, and he hears me.

Psa 77:2 In times of trouble I pray to the Lord; all night long I lift my hands in prayer, but I cannot find comfort.

Psa 77:3 When I think of God, I sigh; when I meditate, I feel discouraged.

Psa 77:4 He keeps me awake all night; I am so worried that I cannot speak.

Psa 77:5 I think of days gone by and remember years of long ago.

Psa 77:6 I spend the night in deep thought; I meditate, and this is what I ask myself:

Psa 77:7 "Will the Lord always reject us? Will he never again be pleased with us?

Psa 77:8 Has he stopped loving us? Does his promise no longer stand?

Psa 77:9 Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has anger taken the place of his compassion?"

Psa 77:10 Then I said, "What hurts me most is this—that God is no longer powerful."

Psa 77:11 I will remember your great deeds, LORD; I will recall the wonders you did in the past.

Psa 77:12 I will think about all that you have done; I will meditate on all your mighty acts.

Psa 77:13 Everything you do, O God, is holy. No god is as great as you.

Psa 77:14 You are the God who works miracles; you showed your might among the nations.

Psa 77:15 By your power you saved your people, the descendants of Jacob and of Joseph.

Psa 77:16 When the waters saw you, O God, they were afraid, and the depths of the sea trembled.

Psa 77:17 The clouds poured down rain; thunder crashed from the sky, and lightning flashed in all directions.

Psa 77:18 The crash of your thunder rolled out, and flashes of lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook.

Psa 77:19 You walked through the waves; you crossed the deep sea, but your footprints could not be seen.

Psa 77:20 You led your people like a shepherd, with Moses and Aaron in charge.

Psalms 77:1-20

Psalms 77 – The Troubled Heart Remembers God's Great Works

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.***

The Chief Musician is thought by some to be the LORD God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). "The notation 'For the director of music' [**Chief Musician**] appears in fifty-five psalms (also in Hab 3:19) and serves probably as a musical addition, marking the psalm to be a part of temple worship or to be recited by the leader of the choir." (Willem VanGemeren)

Jeduthun (mentioned also in the titles of Psalms 39, 62) was one of the musicians appointed by David to lead Israel's public worship (1Ch 16:41; 1Ch 25:1-3). Charles Spurgeon wrote regarding Jeduthun: "The sons of Jeduthun were porters or doorkeepers, according to 1Ch 16:42. Those who serve well make the best of singers, and those who occupy the highest posts in the choir must not be ashamed to wait at the posts of the doors of the Lord's house."

Asaph was the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 2Ch 29:13). 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.

"The message of this psalm is that to brood on sorrow is to be broken and disheartened, while to see God is to sing on the darkest day. Once we come to know that our years are of His right hand, there is light everywhere." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. Comfort and anguish in remembering the works of God.

1. (1-3) Seeking God and remaining troubled.

I cried out to God with my voice—

To God with my voice;

And He gave ear to me.

In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;

My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing;

My soul refused to be comforted.

I remembered God, and was troubled;

I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah

a. **I cried out to God with my voice:** This psalm begins with a thought common in the psalms, with the psalmist describing his cry to God. He **cried out** unto God, and he knew that God heard him (**He gave ear to me**).

i. "Days of trouble must be days of prayer; in days of inward trouble, especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversions of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away." (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **In the day of trouble:** His cry to God was urgent (**in the day of trouble**), active (**stretched out**), and persistent (**without ceasing**).

i. "In [Middle Eastern] fashion he 'stretched out' his hands in prayer (Psa 143:6) and continued to lift up his hands 'at night'." (VanGemenen)

c. **My soul refused to be comforted:** Encouraging thoughts came to mind but were immediately put away.

Friends spoke of God's goodness in the present and brighter future, but the **soul refused** any comfort.

i. Sometimes comfort is refused because it is superficial. One may say to the person in despair, "Go to a movie and have some fun," or some other advice that treats his despair lightly. Sometimes we are in such despair that seeking God and God alone can help, and nothing superficial.

ii. "He refused some comforts as too weak for his case, others as untrue, others as unhallowed; but chiefly because of distraction, he declined even those grounds of consolation which ought to have been effectual with him. As a sick man turns away even from the most nourishing food, so did he. It is impossible to comfort those who refuse to be comforted." (Spurgeon)

iii. "There may be a further hint of this tenacity by an echo of Jacob's refusal to be comforted over Joseph (Gen 37:35)." (Kidner)

d. **I remembered God, and was troubled:** The psalmist earnestly and sincerely cried out to God and knew that God heard him – yet was **troubled**, and felt his **spirit was overwhelmed**. The sense is, "God, I know you are there – why won't You help me the way I need to be helped?"

i. Most often when the believer cries out to God and senses he or she is heard, it brings the peaceful assurance of faith. This is not always the case. Sometimes – especially when we remain in our difficulty instead of being delivered from it – the sense that God has heard us yet our trouble remains brings *more* frustration and not less.

ii. Perhaps this was some of what Paul felt regarding his thorn in the flesh described in 2Co 12:7-10. At first he felt the frustration of unanswered prayer; then he felt the challenge of prayer answered, but not according to previous expectation.

iii. This is the kind of struggle with God known by those somewhat further along in their relationship with God. The depth and complexity of this struggle is worthy of meditation – thus, **Selah** is here inserted.

2. (4-6) *The diligent search.*

**You hold my eyelids open;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.
I call to remembrance my song in the night;
I meditate within my heart,
And my spirit makes diligent search.**

a. **You hold my eyelids open:** Asaph considered the *intensity* of his cry to God. With weary eyes and a troubled heart, he sincerely sought God.

i. "Sorrow, like a beast of prey, devours at night; and every sad heart knows how eyelids, however wearied, refuse to close upon as wearied eyes, which gaze wide opened into the blackness and see dreadful things there. This man felt as if God's finger was pushing up his lids and forcing him to stare out into the night." (Maclaren)

ii. **I cannot speak:** "This shows an *increase* of sorrow and anguish. At *first* he felt his misery, and *called aloud*. He receives more light, sees and feels his deep wretchedness, and then his words are swallowed by excessive distress. His woes are too big for utterance." (Clarke)

b. **I have considered the days of old:** Asaph considered the *extent* of his cry to God, considering what God had done even in **ancient times**. He wondered why God seemed to answer those in the past with more satisfaction than He does in the present.

c. **I call to remembrance my song in the night:** Asaph's seeking after God remembered better times (**song in the night**), and it was deep (**I meditate within my heart**) and **diligent**.

3. (7-9) *The searching questions.*

Will the Lord cast off forever?

And will He be favorable no more?

Has His mercy ceased forever?

Has *His* promise failed forevermore?

Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah

a. **Will the Lord cast off forever?** With these questions Asaph spoke his fear that the season of dryness and frustration might last **forever**. He feared that never again would he see the favor of God, the mercy of God, and the fulfillment of God's **promise**.

i. "Very wisely this good man argued with himself, and sought to cure his unbelief. He treated himself homeopathically, treating like with like. As he was attacked by the disease of questioning, he gave himself questions as a medicine. Observe how he kills one question with another, as men fight fire with fire. Here we have six questions, one after another, each one striking at the very heart of unbelief." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Beloved, if we were sometimes thus to school ourselves and cross-question our own unbelief, the Holy Spirit would give us comfort." (Spurgeon)

b. Has God forgotten to be gracious? With two more questions Asaph wondered if God's grace and mercy were no longer available to him; that they were **forgotten** or blocked toward him.

i. Many a beloved saint has felt the agony of these questions; we could wish that each of them would ask these questions as boldly and honestly as Asaph did.

ii. "Spurgeon's studies of the psalms were produced between 1865 and 1885, and during those twenty years he experienced much ill health, which continued to deteriorate until his death in 1892. He had neuralgia and gout, which left him with swollen, red, painful limbs, so that he frequently could not walk or even write. He had debilitating headaches, and with these physical ills came frightful bouts of depression, leading almost to despair." (Boice)

iii. Therefore, Spurgeon would write of this psalm: "Alas, my God, the writer of this exposition well knows what thy servant Asaph meant, for his soul is familiar with the way of grief. Deep glens and lonely caves of soul depressions, my spirit knows full well your awful glooms!" (Spurgeon)

iv. **Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies:** "The *tender mercies* of God are the *source* whence all his kindness to the children of men flows. The metaphor here is taken from a *spring*, the mouth of which is closed, so that its waters can no longer run in the same channel." (Clarke)

v. "If you are a child of God, yet never had to ask these questions, you ought to be very grateful; but if you have to ask them, be very thankful that Asaph asked them before you; and believe that, as he had a comfortable answer to them, so shall you. It is always a comfort when you can see the footprints of another

man in the mire and the slough, for if that man passed through unharmed, so may you, for his God shall also be your Helper." (Spurgeon)

c. **Selah**: Asaph spoke things that believers rarely feel safe to speak about. Many believers won't risk this kind of honesty. Asaph's honest anguish is worthy of contemplation.

B. The greatness of God.

1. (10-12) *Anguish turns to remembering.*

**And I said, "This is my anguish;
But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."**

**I will remember the works of the LORD;
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.
I will also meditate on all Your work,
And talk of Your deeds.**

a. **This is my anguish**: We appreciate the honest **anguish** of Asaph in this psalm. For him, the apparent gap between what he believed and what he felt was painful.

b. **But I will remember**: In the midst of the painful anguish between what he believed and what he felt, Asaph spoke to himself and declared what he would *do*. He was determined to **remember** something, to keep it in mind.

i. "To the insinuations of distrust, faith now begins to reply." (Horne)

ii. "Memory supplies the colours with which Hope paints her truest pictures." (Maclaren)

iii. "Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries." (Spurgeon)

c. **But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High**: Asaph was determined to remember

the better seasons when God's power seemed unhindered, when His symbolic hand of strength and skill (**the years of the right hand**) were evident. In discouraging times he decided to remember better times and take firm hope for the future.

i. "If no good was in the present, memory ransacked the past to find consolation. She fain would borrow a light from the altars of yesterday to light the gloom of to-day. It is our duty to search for comfort, and not in sullen indolence yield to despair." (Spurgeon)

d. **I will remember...I will also meditate...and talk of Your deeds:** Asaph presented a three-step process to encouragement and healing. It begins with remembering God's great works, His **wonders of old**. Then we should **meditate** on those works, and what they may have to teach us today. The third step is to **talk** of these great things with others.

i. **I will remember the works of the LORD:** Kidner indicated that this was a public *remembrance*. "Strictly speaking, 'I will make mention of'; *i.e.*, it is a public recounting of these deeds."

2. (13-15) *The greatness of God in His sanctuary.*

**Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary;
Who is so great a God as our God?
You are the God who does wonders;
You have declared Your strength among the peoples.
You have with Your arm redeemed Your people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah**

a. **Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary:** In the first part of the psalm, Asaph explained the goodness of remembering, meditating, and speaking of God's greatness. He begins the second part of the psalm by

actually describing God's good works, beginning **in the sanctuary** – either of the temple or tabernacle.

i. The **way** of God was in the sanctuary in the sense that the tabernacle or the temple and its rituals clearly spoke of the way to God through the blood of an innocent sacrifice, ultimately pointing to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

b. **You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples:** Asaph spoke of the miraculous works that displayed the strength of God, as He had done time and again in the history of Israel.

c. **You have with Your arm redeemed Your people:** Many times through their history, Israel saw God's faithful strength rescue them from all kinds of trouble.

i. **The sons of Jacob and Joseph:** "The coupling of *Jacob* and *Joseph* as ancestors of the people redeemed from the Egyptians may be due to the insistence of both of them that the Promised Land, not Egypt, must be their final rest (Gen 47:29 ff; Gen 50:24 f)." (Kidner)

3. (16-20) *The greatness of God at the Red Sea.*

**The waters saw You, O God;
The waters saw You, they were afraid;
The depths also trembled.
The clouds poured out water;
The skies sent out a sound;
Your arrows also flashed about.
The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lit up the world;
The earth trembled and shook.
Your way was in the sea,
Your path in the great waters,**

**And Your footsteps were not known.
You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

a. **The waters saw You, O God:** In this last portion of the psalm, Asaph most likely had in mind the parting and crossing of the Red Sea as an example of one of the great works of God that he would remember, meditate upon, and tell of. He began by poetically describing the waters of the Red Sea as **afraid** of Yahweh, and ready to flee at His presence.

i. "The waters of the Red Sea are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility, as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator." (Horne)

b. **The clouds poured out water:** We are not told of a mighty thunderstorm that accompanied the parting of the Red Sea, but Asaph described the rain, **thunder**, and lightning (**Your arrows also flashed about**). It's hard to know at this point if Asaph is describing something not included in Exodus 14 or simply describing the presence and power of God in poetic terms.

i. It seems more favorable to take this literally. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus did: "As soon as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunder-bolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time; for a dark and dismal night oppressed them. And thus did all these men perish, so

that there was not one man left to be a messenger of this calamity to the rest of the Egyptians.” (Josephus, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. “Either these are details missing from the original account but preserved in the historical memory of the people or they are a poetic embellishment of the incident. Whatever the case, there is nothing improbable about these additional manifestations of God’s power on that great night of nights for Israel.” (Boice)

iii. **Your arrows:** “Either hail-stones, or rather lightnings or thunder-bolts, which are called God’s *arrows*, Psa 18:14; Psa 144:6.” (Poole)

c. **The earth trembled and shook:** Asaph described the presence of God as being so manifest at the parting of the Red Sea that the earth itself shook. Again, since this is not recorded in the Exodus 14 account, either he adds information or is simply giving a poetic description.

d. **Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters:** When God miraculously parted the waters of the Red Sea, it was as if He cleared a great road or **path** for Himself that He also gave to His people to use.

i. **Your path in the great waters:** “It is a true picture of God’s sway over nature. Even when He was incarnate, the winds and waves would obey Him and the sea provide a path for Him.” (Kidner)

ii. **Your footsteps were not known:** “God is described as wading through mighty oceans as a man might ford some tiny stream. The Atlantic with fathomless depths is no more to Him than a brook to us.” (Meyer)

e. **You led Your people like a flock:** As a final description of God’s mighty work at the Red Sea, Asaph

noted that God led His people on the path through the sea, as well as by His servants Moses and Aaron.

i. We see that God works *both* in great wonders (as at the Red Sea) and in the normal leading of His people through human instruments (**Moses and Aaron**). One never excludes the other.

ii. "The smiter of Egypt was the shepherd of Israel. He drove his foes before him, but went before his people." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The loving-kindness of God towards Israel did not stop at the Red Sea, but he conducted his chosen flock, by the guidance of faithful pastors, through all the perils of the wilderness, to the land of promise." (Horne)

iv. "This mighty God has the tender heart of a shepherd. He leads His people like a flock; not overdriving, but carrying the lambs in His bosom, and gently leading those that are with young. Mightier than the mightiest, but meeker than the meekest!" (Meyer)

Tell the Coming Generation

Psa 78:1 Listen, my people, to my teaching, and pay attention to what I say.

Psa 78:2 I am going to use wise sayings and explain mysteries from the past,

Psa 78:3 things we have heard and known, things that our ancestors told us.

Psa 78:4 We will not keep them from our children; we will tell the next generation about the LORD's power and his great deeds and the wonderful things he has done.

Psa 78:5 He gave laws to the people of Israel and commandments to the descendants of Jacob. He instructed our ancestors to teach his laws to their children,

Psa 78:6 so that the next generation might learn them and in turn should tell their children.

Psa 78:7 In this way they also will put their trust in God and not forget what he has done, but always obey his commandments.

Psa 78:8 They will not be like their ancestors, a rebellious and disobedient people, whose trust in God was never firm and who did not remain faithful to him.

Psa 78:9 The Ephraimites, armed with bows and arrows, ran away on the day of battle.

Psa 78:10 They did not keep their covenant with God; they refused to obey his law.

Psa 78:11 They forgot what he had done, the miracles they had seen him perform.

Psa 78:12 While their ancestors watched, God performed miracles in the plain of Zoan in the land of Egypt.

Psa 78:13 He divided the sea and took them through it; he made the waters stand like walls.

Psa 78:14 By day he led them with a cloud and all night long with the light of a fire.

Psa 78:15 He split rocks open in the desert and gave them water from the depths.

Psa 78:16 He caused a stream to come out of the rock and made water flow like a river.

Psa 78:17 But they continued to sin against God, and in the desert they rebelled against the Most High.

Psa 78:18 They deliberately put God to the test by demanding the food they wanted.

Psa 78:19 They spoke against God and said, "Can God supply food in the desert?"

Psa 78:20 It is true that he struck the rock, and water flowed out in a torrent; but can he also provide us with bread and give his people meat?"

Psa 78:21 And so the LORD was angry when he heard them; he attacked his people with fire, and his anger against them grew,

Psa 78:22 because they had no faith in him and did not believe that he would save them.

Psa 78:23 But he spoke to the sky above and commanded its doors to open;

Psa 78:24 he gave them grain from heaven, by sending down manna for them to eat.

Psa 78:25 So they ate the food of angels, and God gave them all they wanted.

Psa 78:26 He also caused the east wind to blow, and by his power he stirred up the south wind;

Psa 78:27 and to his people he sent down birds, as many as the grains of sand on the shore;

Psa 78:28 they fell in the middle of the camp all around the tents.

Psa 78:29 So the people ate and were satisfied; God gave them what they wanted.

Psa 78:30 But they had not yet satisfied their craving and were still eating,

Psa 78:31 when God became angry with them and killed their strongest men, the best young men of Israel.

Psa 78:32 In spite of all this the people kept sinning; in spite of his miracles they did not trust him.

Psa 78:33 So he ended their days like a breath and their lives with sudden disaster.

Psa 78:34 Whenever he killed some of them, the rest would turn to him; they would repent and pray earnestly to him.

Psa 78:35 They remembered that God was their protector, that the Almighty came to their aid.

Psa 78:36 But their words were all lies; nothing they said was sincere.

Psa 78:37 They were not loyal to him; they were not faithful to their covenant with him.

Psa 78:38 But God was merciful to his people. He forgave their sin and did not destroy them. Many times he held back his anger and restrained his fury.

Psa 78:39 He remembered that they were only mortal beings, like a wind that blows by and is gone.

Psa 78:40 How often they rebelled against him in the desert; how many times they made him sad!

Psa 78:41 Again and again they put God to the test and brought pain to the Holy God of Israel.

Psa 78:42 They forgot his great power and the day when he saved them from their enemies

Psa 78:43 and performed his mighty acts and miracles in the plain of Zoan in the land of Egypt.

Psa 78:44 He turned the rivers into blood, and the Egyptians had no water to drink.

Psa 78:45 He sent flies among them, that tormented them, and frogs that ruined their land.

Psa 78:46 He sent locusts to eat their crops and to destroy their fields.

Psa 78:47 He killed their grapevines with hail and their fig trees with frost.

Psa 78:48 He killed their cattle with hail and their flocks with lightning.

Psa 78:49 He caused them great distress by pouring out his anger and fierce rage, which came as messengers of death.

Psa 78:50 He did not restrain his anger or spare their lives, but killed them with a plague.

Psa 78:51 He killed the first-born sons of all the families of Egypt.

Psa 78:52 Then he led his people out like a shepherd and guided them through the desert.

Psa 78:53 He led them safely, and they were not afraid; but the sea came rolling over their enemies.

Psa 78:54 He brought them to his holy land, to the mountains which he himself conquered.

Psa 78:55 He drove out the inhabitants as his people advanced; he divided their land among the tribes of Israel and gave their homes to his people.

Psa 78:56 But they rebelled against Almighty God and put him to the test. They did not obey his commandments,

Psa 78:57 but were rebellious and disloyal like their ancestors, unreliable as a crooked arrow.

Psa 78:58 They angered him with their heathen places of worship, and with their idols they made him furious.

Psa 78:59 God was angry when he saw it, so he rejected his people completely.

Psa 78:60 He abandoned his tent in Shiloh, the home where he had lived among us.

Psa 78:61 He allowed our enemies to capture the Covenant Box, the symbol of his power and glory.

Psa 78:62 He was angry with his own people and let them be killed by their enemies.

Psa 78:63 Young men were killed in war, and young women had no one to marry.

Psa 78:64 Priests died by violence, and their widows were not allowed to mourn.

Psa 78:65 At last the Lord woke up as though from sleep; he was like a strong man excited by wine.

Psa 78:66 He drove his enemies back in lasting and shameful defeat.

Psa 78:67 But he rejected the descendants of Joseph; he did not select the tribe of Ephraim.

Psa 78:68 Instead he chose the tribe of Judah and Mount Zion, which he dearly loves.

Psa 78:69 There he built his Temple like his home in heaven; he made it firm like the earth itself, secure for all time.

Psa 78:70 He chose his servant David; he took him from the pastures,

Psa 78:71 where he looked after his flocks, and he made him king of Israel, the shepherd of the people of God.

Psa 78:72 David took care of them with unselfish devotion and led them with skill.

Psalms 78:1-72

Psalms 78 – Learning from God’s Faithfulness to His Rebellious People

*This psalm is titled **A Contemplation of Asaph**. The author **Asaph** was the great singer and musician of David and Solomon’s era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 2Ch 29:13). 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.*

"Psalms 78 is the longest of the historical psalms. Its lesson is that history must not repeat itself. The people must never again be unbelieving." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. Introduction: Learning from the past, teaching for the future.

1. (1-4) Gaining the attention of the people of God.

**Give ear, O my people, to my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide *them* from their children,**

**Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.**

a. **Give ear, O my people, to my law:** Psalms 78 is a *wisdom* psalm, written to instruct God's people. The theme is the goodness and kindness of God to His stubborn and rebellious people. Asaph began by asking for the attention of God's people so they could hear the wisdom he would speak.

i. Psalms 78 begins with a principle sometimes neglected among those who would speak wisdom to others: you must first gain the *attention* of your listeners if you would teach them and reach them.

ii. **Incline your ears:** "Inclining the ears does not denote any ordinary sort of hearing, but such as a disciple renders to the words of his master, with submission and reverence of mind, silent and earnest, that whatever is enunciated for the purpose of instruction may be heard and properly understood, and nothing be allowed to escape. He is a hearer of a different stamp, who hears carelessly, not for the purpose of learning or imitation, but to criticise, to make merry, to indulge animosity, or to kill time." (Musculus, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **I will open my mouth in a parable:** Psalms 49 is another wisdom psalm with reference to a proverb or **parable** and the **dark sayings**. The phrase **dark sayings** does not have in mind hidden or mystical knowledge, but things that can simply be difficult to understand – *riddles* that are good topics for instruction.

i. **In a parable:** "The word for *parable* (*masal*) gives the book of Proverbs its title. Basically this means a

comparison, *i.e.*, a saying which uses one realm of life to illuminate another.” (Kidner)

ii. Mat 13:35 quotes Psa 78:2 as a prophecy of the way Jesus would teach.

c. **Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us:** Asaph will not bring up *new* things for discussion, but things already within the mind of Israel.

d. **Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD:** Asaph knew what followed in this psalm came from events and themes received from their **fathers**. He also knew that what they had received, they had to pass on to the next **generation**; they had a responsibility to **not hide them from their children**.

i. “For the classic passage on teaching this faith to one’s *children* see Deu 6:6-9, for Scripture has no room for parental neutrality.” (Kidner)

ii. “The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath-school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mothers’ tears and fathers’ prayers.” (Spurgeon)

e. **The praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done:** Asaph was concerned about passing on at least three things to the next generation.

- The **praises of the LORD** – teaching them that God was worthy of our adoration and gratitude.
- God’s **strength** – His power and greatness above and beyond all.
- **His wonderful works** – that is, God’s power and greatness in active assistance to His people.

i. It is *still* good and necessary for us to pass these things on. We should speak often about them and tell the continually unfolding story of how God has done **wonderful works** in and through His people.

ii. This speaks to the importance of seeing and understanding the hand of God as He moves in and through history. "History should ever be the record of the works of God. That is to emphasize the important factor. History thus written, and thus taught, will so affect hope and memory in youth, as to constrain it to obedience to the God revealed; and this is the way of life for man and nation." (Morgan)

iii. This psalm emphasizes the **strength** and the **wonderful works** of God – not the strength or wonderful works of His people. This psalm is remarkably honest about the failings of God's people. "The supreme quality of this psalm is that throughout all its measures, over against the repeated failure of His people, God's persistent patience is set forth in bold relief." (Morgan)

iv. "Those who forget God's works are sure to fail in their own." (Spurgeon)

2. (5-8) Teaching one generation to avoid the errors of previous generations.

**For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their children;
That the generation to come might know *them*,
The children *who* would be born,
That they may arise and declare *them* to their children,
That they may set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,**

**But keep His commandments;
And may not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation *that* did not set its heart aright,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.**

a. **He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel:** Using poetic repetition for style and emphasis, Asaph began by describing one of the greatest of God's *wonderful works* (verse 4) – the giving of God's word to **Israel**.

i. Centuries later the Apostle Paul would explain that one of the great advantages God gave to Israel was that He committed to them His word, *the oracles of God* (Rom 3:2).

b. **That they should make them known to their children:** Then and now, God gives His word so that it will be *transmitted* to following generations. In theory, the revelation of God's word can perish or become utterly irrelevant if not passed on to the next generation.

i. "Through Moses he had commanded all Israelites, regardless of tribal descent, to instruct their children at home (Deu 6:6-9; Deu 6:20-22; cf. Exo 10:2; Exo 12:26-27; Exo 13:8)." (VanGemeren)

c. **That they may arise and declare them to their children:** Not only should our children be taught, they should be taught to teach **their children** so that the word and the work of God will continue throughout the generations.

i. "*Five* generations appear to be mentioned above: 1. Fathers; 2. Their children; 3. The generation to come; 4. And their children; 5. And their children. They were never to lose sight of their history throughout all their generations." (Clarke)

d. **That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God:** The purpose of communicating to the next generation is that they would learn to trust God for themselves, never forgetting His wonderful works.

e. **But keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers:** To the psalmist, losing trust in God and forgetting His works would lead to disobedience. If the younger generation is well instructed, they would be more likely to be obedient, avoiding many of the errors of **their fathers**.

f. **A stubborn and rebellious generation:** Asaph described the sins of previous generations in Israel. They were **stubborn and rebellious**; they did not **set their hearts aright**, and their **spirit was not faithful to God**. Asaph's focus was on heart and attitude more than on *action*.

3. (9-11) *Preview and overview: losing the spiritual battle.*

The children of Ephraim, *being armed and carrying bows,*

Turned back in the day of battle.

They did not keep the covenant of God;

They refused to walk in His law,

And forgot His works

And His wonders that He had shown them.

a. **The children of Ephraim:** The tribe of **Ephraim** was one of the larger tribes of Israel, and sometimes God called Israel "**Ephraim**." In 2Ch 25:7 God used the phrase *children of Ephraim* to refer to the people of Israel as a whole.

i. "As the largest of the breakaway tribes, their subsequent history was to make them almost a symbol of backsliding and apostasy." (Kidner)

ii. "The prophetic writings (especially Hosea) show that Ephraim became the leader in the rebellion and disloyalty that cursed the nation, and so, figuratively and standing for the rest, Ephraim is here addressed." (Morgan)

b. Being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle: Because it is difficult to match this with a known instance in Israel's history, perhaps the sense here is of a *spiritual* battle. Spiritually speaking, God equipped Israel for conflict. They were **armed** and had **bows**. Yet they often failed in **the day of battle**, because **they did not keep the covenant of God**.

i. "The incident referred to is not known. It was a time when 'Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle' (Psa 78:9). Nothing exactly like this is found anywhere in the Old Testament." (Boice)

ii. Yet, "The psalmist's description 'armed with bows' fits well with their aggressiveness as portrayed in the Book of Judges (Jdg 8:1-3; Jdg 12:1-6)." (VanGemeren)

iii. "The reference to Ephraim in Psa 78:9-11 is not to be taken as alluding to any cowardly retreat from actual battle. Psa 78:9 seems to be a purely figurative way of expressing what is put without a metaphor in the two following verses. Ephraim's revolt from God's covenant was like the conduct of soldiers, well armed and refusing to charge the foe." (Maclaren)

iv. God makes spiritual resources available to His people for the spiritual conflicts they face (Eph 6:10-18). However, the effectiveness of those resources depends in some regard on their decision to actually make use of them. Ultimately, God's people are assured of victory in Jesus. Day to day there may be

defeats and setbacks – being **turned back in the day of battle** – because available resources are not used.

v. Spiritually considered, there are many who are **turned back in the day of battle**, though in different ways.

- Some turn back before the battle begins.
- Some turn back as soon as the battle is engaged.
- Some turn back when the first injury is received.
- Some turn back when the battle becomes long.

c. **They refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders:** Disobedience and ignorance among God's people were examples of being **turned back in the day of battle**. This is a warning to all generations: the spiritual battle may be lost.

i. **And forgot His works:** "It would seem almost past belief to us as we read that a people so led could forget. Yet is not this sin of forgetfulness with us perpetually? In some day of danger and perplexity we become so occupied with the immediate peril as utterly to fail to think of past deliverances. Such forgetfulness is of the nature of unbelief in its worst form." (Morgan)

ii. **Forgot His works:** "Not historically, but practically. They did not so remember them, as to love, and serve, and trust that God of whose infinite power and goodness they had such ample experience." (Poole)

iii. "Ere we condemn them, let us repent of our own wicked forgetfulness, and confess the many occasions upon which we also have been unmindful of past favours." (Spurgeon)

B. Stubborn, rebellious Israel in the Exodus from Egypt.

1. (12-16) God brought Israel out of Egypt, through the sea, and gave the people water in the wilderness.

**Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.
He divided the sea and caused them to pass through;
And He made the waters stand up like a heap.
In the daytime also He led them with the cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
He split the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave *them* drink in abundance like the depths.
He also brought streams out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.**

a. **Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt:** Asaph remembered how God helped His people as described in the first part of the Book of Exodus. Through a series of miraculous plagues and demonstrations of God's power, Pharaoh was compelled to let Israel go from slavery, and the people left rewarded with riches from the Egyptians (Exodus 5-13).

i. "Zoan is better known as Tanis, in the north-east of the Nile Delta, a city which was either identical with Rameses II's capital (Raamses, which the Israelites helped to build: Exo 1:11) or not many miles from it." (Kidner)

b. **He divided the sea and caused them to pass through:** As Pharaoh's armies pursued Israel, God miraculously brought the people through the sea on dry ground as God **made the waters stand up like a heap** (Exodus 14).

c. **In the daytime also He led them with the cloud, and all the night with a light of fire:** When the Israelites came into the wilderness of Sinai, God assured them and guided them with the two demonstrations of His presence – the **cloud** by day and the **fire** by night (Exo 40:36-38).

i. **"A cloud;** which was very comfortable, both for a shadow from the scorching heat of the climate and season, and for a companion and director in their journey." (Poole)

d. **He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink:** Often in the wilderness the nation of Israel needed water, and many times God miraculously provided. One occasion was at Meribah where Moses struck the rock and it presumably split, bringing forth water (Num 20:10-13, Isa 48:21).

i. **"Rocks;** he useth the plural number, because it was twice done; once in Rephidim, Exo 17:6, and again in Kadesh, Num 20:1; Num 20:11." (Poole)

2. (17-20) *Israel's stubborn, rebellious response to God's wonderful works.*

**But they sinned even more against Him
By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.
And they tested God in their heart
By asking for the food of their fancy.
Yes, they spoke against God:
They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people?"**

a. **But they sinned even more against Him:** God repeatedly did great and amazing things for Israel in taking the people out of Egypt and preserving them in the wilderness. Yet Israel's response was to sin **even more** and to rebel **against the Most High**.

b. **They tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy:** God provided Israel's needs in the wilderness, but sometimes the people demanded more. He gave them manna, but they soon wanted meat – **the food of their fancy** (as in Num 11:4-10; Num 11:18-23; Num 11:31-34). This **tested** God.

i. God promises to provide our needs. He never promised to give us **the food of our fancy**.

ii. "Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh." (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. We could say that the people of Israel were guilty of at least two sins.

- They were dissatisfied with what God provided.
- They thought the reason why God didn't give them what they wanted was because He *couldn't* – that it was beyond His power.

c. **Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?** With these words they **spoke against God**; they **tested** Him, expressing their lack of faith in His power and lack of trust in His care. They didn't believe that God could give them a banquet in the wilderness.

i. "Israel had seen the wonderful works of God, cleaving the sea, lighting the night, and giving water from rocks. Yet they questioned God's ability to give bread, and to spread out a table in the wilderness." (Meyer)

ii. "It was no sin to be hungry and thirsty; it was a necessity of their nature. There is nothing living that does not desire and require food: when we do not we are dead, and that they did so was no sin. Their sin was *to doubt that God could or would support them in the wilderness, or allow those who followed his leadings to lack any good thing*. This was their sin." (North, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "The expression, *spread a table*, uses the same words as Psa 23:5, whose serenity is a shining contrast to this." (Kidner)

iv. In 1933 – the middle of the Great Depression – a young Irishman named J. Edwin Orr left a good paying job and, with no fixed source of income, he trusted that God would provide for him and his mother. He planned to travel around Great Britain with the message of prayer, salvation, and revival. He left Belfast with 2 shillings and 8 pence – about 65 cents. He had a bicycle, a change of clothes, and a Bible. He spent the next year travelling to every county in Great Britain and organizing some 300 prayer groups dedicated to pray for revival. He wrote a book about it all and finally convinced a publisher to take it – after being rejected 17 times. That first book, titled *Can God-?*, was based on Psa 78:19 and published in 1934. It sold hundreds of thousands of copies and was a tremendous inspiration to Christians in that day. Orr's book and his life were a remarkable demonstration of the fact that God **can prepare a table in the wilderness**.

v. "Though behind us lay the gift of the Cross, the miracles of the Resurrection and Ascension, the care exercised by God over our early years, the goodness and mercy of our after lives, we are disposed to say,

'Can God?'.... Fetch arguments for faith from the days that have gone." (Meyer)

vi. "The words are wrongly placed. Never say again, 'Can God?' but God can." (Meyer)

d. **Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?** Repeatedly, God showed Israel that He could do all this and more. The people asked these doubting questions with the miraculously provided manna in their stomachs.

i. "Who will say that a man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness, if he nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future?" (Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (21-25) *God's anger with the unbelief and mistrust of Israel.*

**Therefore the LORD heard *this* and was furious;
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel,
Because they did not believe in God,
And did not trust in His salvation.
Yet He had commanded the clouds above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
Had rained down manna on them to eat,
And given them of the bread of heaven.
Men ate angels' food;
He sent them food to the full.**

a. **Therefore the LORD heard this and was furious:** God blessed and provided for Israel in the escape from Egypt and in the wilderness; Israel responded with complaining and unbelief. God did not ignore this; He **heard** it and He **was furious** with their sin against Him.

i. Keep in mind that the sins Asaph had in mind were the sins of ingratitude, testing God, and doubting His power and His care. These were sins God was **furious**

with. We often think God takes little account of such sins.

ii. "He was not indifferent to what they said. He dwelt among them in the holy place, and, therefore, they insulted him to his face. He did not hear a report of it, but the language itself came into his ears." (Spurgeon)

b. **So a fire was kindled against Jacob:** Asaph may have had in mind what happened at Taberah, where in judgment *the fire of the LORD burned among* Israel (Num 11:1-3).

c. **Because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation:** In case we didn't get it before, Asaph stated it clearly for emphasis. *These* were the sins that made God **furious** and made His judgment burn like **fire** against Israel. Unbelief and mistrust toward God are counted as small sins by many today.

i. "In the text it appears as if all Israel's other sins were as nothing compared with this; this is the peculiar spot which the Lord points at, the special provocation which angered him. From this let every unbeliever learn to tremble more at his unbelief than at anything else. If he be no fornicator, or thief, or liar, let him reflect that it is quite enough to condemn him that he trusts not in God's salvation." (Spurgeon)

d. **Yet He had commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven:** Their dark sin is set against the white background of God's goodness and constant care for them. He gave them and

kept giving them **bread of heaven** and **angels' food**, and they ate **to the full**.

i. There have been many attempts to understand manna as a known natural phenomena. It's possible

that there is a link to something along these lines, such as the sugary substance modern Arabs call *mann*; yet the sense of verses 24-25 is that there was something *supernatural* and even *other-worldly* about manna.

ii. "Tis called '*angels' food*,' not because the angels do daily feed upon it, but because it was both made and ministered by the ministry of angels, and that phrase sets forth the excellency of it." (Ness, cited in Spurgeon)

e. **And given them of the bread of heaven:** John records in his Gospel that in trying to persuade Jesus to keep providing miraculous bread, those who had been fed quoted this line from verse 24 (*Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat," Joh 6:31*). In quoting this psalm to Jesus, they fulfilled it in a negative way, showing the same ingratitude and willingness to test God that Israel showed in the wilderness.

i. "In appealing to this very psalm, the arguers [those contesting with Jesus in John 6] were handling too sharp a weapon." (Kidner)

ii. In verse 24, **bread of heaven** is more literally *grain of heaven* – or, *corn* in the King James Version. "The manna was round, like coriander seed, and hence was rightly called corn; it did not rise from the earth, but descended from the clouds, and hence the words of the verse are literally accurate." (Spurgeon)

4. (26-31) *The sending of fowl for meat.*

**He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens;
And by His power He brought in the south wind.
He also rained meat on them like the dust,
Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;**

**And He let *them* fall in the midst of their camp,
All around their dwellings.
So they ate and were well filled,
For He gave them their own desire.
They were not deprived of their craving;
But while their food *was* still in their mouths,
The wrath of God came against them,
And slew the stoutest of them,
And struck down the choice *men* of Israel.**

a. **He also rained meat on them like the dust:** Num 11:31-33 describes how God sent quail to Israel when they complained about the manna. He literally **let them fall in the midst of their camp**, bringing the meat they craved to them.

b. **So they ate and were well filled, for He gave them their own desire:** Asaph wrote this with a strong sense of irony. Israel was **well filled**, but not with good quail meat in their stomachs. God **gave them their own desire**, but because **their craving** was rooted in their self-will, the result was not good.

i. **He gave them their own desire:** "The Lord shewed them that he could 'provide flesh for his people,' even enough and to spare. He also shewed them that when lust wins its desire, it is disappointed." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Consider that there is more real satisfaction in mortifying lusts than in making provision for them or in fulfilling them: there is more true pleasure in crossing and pinching our flesh than in gratifying it; were there any true pleasure in sin, hell would not be hell, for the more sin, the more joy. You cannot satisfy one lust if you would do your utmost, and make yourself never so absolute a slave to it; you think if you had your heart's desire you would be at

rest: you much mistake; they had it.” (Carmichael, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **While their food was still in their mouths, the wrath of God came against them:** Num 11:33 stated it like this: *But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.* God gave a disobedient and rebellious Israel all they desired and craved, and the quail turned to a plague of judgment among them.

5. (32-39) *A merciful response to great sin.*

**In spite of this they still sinned,
And did not believe in His wondrous works.
Therefore their days He consumed in futility,
And their years in fear.
When He slew them, then they sought Him;
And they returned and sought earnestly for God.
Then they remembered that God was their rock,
And the Most High God their Redeemer.
Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth,
And they lied to Him with their tongue;
For their heart was not steadfast with Him,
Nor were they faithful in His covenant.
But He, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their*
iniquity,
And did not destroy *them*.
Yes, many a time He turned His anger away,
And did not stir up all His wrath;
For He remembered that they *were but* flesh,
A breath that passes away and does not come again.**

a. **In spite of this they still sinned:** In some ways this is the most tragic line of this psalm. Despite all the blessings and the strongest of corrections, **they still**

sinned. Israel didn't learn either from God's goodness or from His wrath.

b. Therefore their days He consumed in futility and their years in fear: God said that the generation of unbelieving people could not enter the Promised Land; that generation would be **consumed** in the wilderness (Num 14:22-24). The **futility** was expressed in the idea that they came out of Egypt, but never into Canaan. The **fear** was expressed in their unwillingness to take the land by faith (Num 14:1-4).

c. When He slew them, then they sought Him: It took the most extreme correction from God, but eventually a generation of people grew and **sought earnestly for God** – but even their seeking was somewhat insincere.

i. "But such seeking after God, which is properly not seeking Him at all, but only seeking to escape from evil, neither goes deep nor lasts long." (Maclaren)

ii. "As iron is very soft and malleable while in the fire, but soon after returneth to its former hardness; so many, while afflicted, seem very well affected, but afterwards soon show what they are." (Trapp)

d. Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth: Their seeking of God was sincere but short-lived. Soon they came to God only with flattering, insincere words. Strange to think a man could think he could lie to God, yet **they** (and often we) **lied to Him with their tongue.**

i. "False on their knees, liars in their prayers. Mouth-worship must be very detestable to God when dissociated from the heart: other kings love flattery, but the King of Kings abhors it." (Spurgeon)

e. **But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity:** God's response to their stubborn rebellion, to their insincere seeking, to their failure to be **faithful in His covenant**, was surprising. God showed His **compassion**, He **forgave**, and **many a time He turned His anger away**.

i. "It is indeed a great song of God's patience, and there is no story more fruitful than if men will but learn it." (Morgan)

ii. "Though not mentioned in the text, we know from the history that a mediator interposed, the man Moses stood in the gap." (Spurgeon)

f. **He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes:** In part, God's understanding of the weakness of humanity prompted His compassion and forgiveness. One reason He was merciful to them was because of their frail nature.

i. "His compassion found expression in his forgiveness (cf. Psa 65:3) of their sins, his forbearance with their stubborn spirits, and his empathy with the human condition, so that the full brunt of his anger did not destroy them." (VanGemeren)

ii. "How gracious on the Lord's part to make man's insignificance an argument for staying his wrath." (Spurgeon)

6. (40-55) *From Egypt to Canaan, Israel's failure to remember the power of God.*

**How often they provoked Him in the wilderness,
And grieved Him in the desert!**

**Yes, again and again they tempted God,
And limited the Holy One of Israel.**

They did not remember His power:

The day when He redeemed them from the enemy,

**When He worked His signs in Egypt,
And His wonders in the field of Zoan;
Turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not drink.
He sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured
them,
And frogs, which destroyed them.
He also gave their crops to the caterpillar,
And their labor to the locust.
He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycamore trees with frost.
He also gave up their cattle to the hail,
And their flocks to fiery lightning.
He cast on them the fierceness of His anger,
Wrath, indignation, and trouble,
By sending angels of destruction *among them*.
He made a path for His anger;
He did not spare their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the plague,
And destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt,
The first of *their* strength in the tents of Ham.
But He made His own people go forth like sheep,
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;
And He led them on safely, so that they did not fear;
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
And He brought them to His holy border,
This mountain *which* His right hand had acquired.
He also drove out the nations before them,
Allotted them an inheritance by survey,
And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.**

a. How often they provoked Him in the wilderness:
Asaph just explained God's compassionate response to Israel's sin. Yet he did not want to ignore Israel's sin, their great debt of ingratitude, and their rebellion against God.

b. Again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel: Not only did Israel's stubborn disobedience provoke and tempt God, there was a real sense in which it **limited the Holy One of Israel**. In one sense it is impossible for the creature to limit the Creator. Yet, when God ties His work to man's faith and/or obedience, there is a sense in which man can and does limit God.

i. Mat 13:58 says of the ministry of Jesus in Nazareth, *Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief*. As long as God chooses to work in concert with human agency, developing our ability to partner with Him, our unbelief can and may hinder the work of God.

ii. It's possible that **limited the Holy One of Israel** isn't the best translation of the Hebrew. "The rare verb in 41b probably means hurt or *provoked* (Septuagint and most moderns) rather than King James Version's 'limited', appropriate though the latter might seem." (Kidner)

c. They did not remember His power, the day when He redeemed them from the enemy: Asaph had in mind the great power God showed in setting Israel free from their 400 years of slavery in Egypt. The exodus redemption is often presented in the Hebrew Scriptures as a demonstration of the **power** of God.

i. In the New Testament we have a new and ultimate demonstration of the power of God: the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:4, Eph 1:19-20, Php 3:10). Paul might have rephrased Psa 78:42, *They did not remember His power, the day when He raised Jesus from the dead*.

ii. "The psalmist traces Israel's sin to forgetfulness of God's mercy, and thus glides into a swift summing up

of the plagues of Egypt, regarded as conducing to Israel's deliverance. They are not arranged chronologically, though the list begins with the first." (Maclaren)

d. **When He worked His signs in Egypt:** Asaph recounted how God demonstrated His power for Israel and against Pharaoh by sending the plagues upon Egypt. The plagues were special demonstrations of God's power because they were focused against Egyptian deities.

- When God **turned their rivers into blood**, He showed He was greater than the Egyptian gods *Khnum* (said to be the guardian of the Nile), *Hapi* (supposedly the spirit of the Nile), and *Osiris*, said to have the Nile as his bloodstream (Exo 7:17-20).
- When God **sent swarms of flies** and lice, He showed that He was greater than the Egyptian god *Imhotep* (believed to be the god of medicine), and that He was able to stop the whole worship of the Egyptian gods with loathsome lice and swarms of insects (Exo 8:20-32).
- When God sent **frogs**, He showed that He was greater than the Egyptian goddess *Heqt*, believed to be the frog-goddess of fertility (Exo 8:1-15).
- When God gave **their labor to the locust**, He showed that He was greater than the Egyptian god *Set*, thought to be the protector of crops (Exo 10:1-20).
- When God destroyed their agriculture with **hail** and **frost** and their **flocks to fiery lightning**, He showed that He was greater than the Egyptian goddess *Nut*, the supposed sky goddess (Exo 9:13-35).
- When God **gave up their cattle to the hail**, He showed that He was greater than the Egyptian

goddess *Hathor*, believed to be a cow-like mother goddess (Exo 9:1-7).

i. "The psalm omits the plague of gnats, the disease inflicted on the livestock, the boils visited on the people, and the days of darkness. There is no discernible reason either for the choice of the six judgments or the omission of the other four." (Boice)

e. By sending angels of destruction among them:

The worst of all the plagues was the last, the death of the firstborn. Egypt and Pharaoh would not give God *His* firstborn – Israel (Exo 4:22-23); so God took the firstborn of Egypt (Exo 11:1 to Exo 12:30).

i. "His last arrow was the sharpest. He reserved the strong wine of his indignation to the last. Note how the psalmist piles up the words, and well he might; for blow followed blow, each one more staggering than its predecessor, and then the crushing stroke was reserved for the end." (Spurgeon)

f. He made His own people go forth like sheep:

After the death of the firstborn, the Egyptians begged the Israelites to leave and sent them away with gifts, happy to be rid of them. Asaph then summarized the next many years.

- **He led them on safely:** God protected them all the way.

- **The sea overwhelmed their enemies:** God destroyed the pursuing Egyptian army when the waters of the sea came crashing down upon them.

- **He brought them to His holy border:** The border of His holy land of promise.

- **He also drove out the nations before them:** Many of the Canaanite peoples were cleared away before Israel ever came to the land.

- He **allotted them an inheritance by survey**: The land was divided among those to whom He had made an eternal promise of the land.

i. "The contrast is striking, and ought never to have been forgotten by the people. The wolves were slain in heaps, the sheep were carefully gathered, and triumphantly delivered. The tables were turned, and the poor serfs became the honoured people, while their oppressors were humbled before them."
(Spurgeon)

C. Stubborn, rebellious Israel in the Promised Land.

1. (56-64) The terrible tragedy at Shiloh.

**Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God,
And did not keep His testimonies,
But turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers;
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
For they provoked Him to anger with their high places,
And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.
When God heard *this*, He was furious,
And greatly abhorred Israel,
So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
The tent He had placed among men,
And delivered His strength into captivity,
And His glory into the enemy's hand.
He also gave His people over to the sword,
And was furious with His inheritance.
The fire consumed their young men,
And their maidens were not given in marriage.
Their priests fell by the sword,
And their widows made no lamentation.**

- a. **Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God**: The previous long section of this psalm (verses 40

through 55) recounted God's great faithfulness while in Egypt and as they went to Canaan. Yet once Israel came into the Promised Land, they **did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted unfaithfully.**

i. **Turned aside like a deceitful bow:** "In this they were unreliable, like a 'faulty bow' that springs wrongly when needed (cf. Psa 78:9; Hos 7:16)."
(VanGemeren)

ii. "The figure of a 'deceitful bow,' in Psa 78:57, well describes the people as failing to fulfil the purpose of their choice by God. As such a weapon does not shoot true, and makes the arrow fly wide, however well aimed and strongly drawn, so Israel foiled all Divine attempts, and failed to carry God's message to the world, or to fulfil His will in themselves." (Maclaren)

iii. "Israel boasted of the bow as the national weapon, they sang the song of the bow, and hence a deceitful bow is made to be the type and symbol of their own unsteadfastness; God can make men's glory the very ensign of their shame." (Spurgeon)

b. **They provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their carved images:** When Israel came into the Promised Land, they often worshiped the gods of the Canaanites, setting up altars on the **high places** and worshipping gods of **carved images.**

i. "The characteristic sin is no longer discontent (the paradox of the wilderness years with their daily miracles) but idolatry – the paradox of the years in Canaan, whose idolaters God had used Israel to judge." (Kidner)

c. **He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh:** Asaph remembered the tragedy at **Shiloh**, where the Philistines overran the tabernacle, killed the priests, and captured the ark of the covenant (1 Samuel 4).

d. **Delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand:** When the ark of the covenant was captured at Shiloh, the daughter-in-law of Eli the high priest also learned that her husband, her brother-in-law, her father-in-law, and 30,000 Israeli soldiers were killed.

i. She was pregnant and the news was so overwhelming that she went into labor and died giving birth. With her last words she said to name the child born on such a tragic day, *Ichabod* – meaning, *the glory has departed* (1Sa 4:20-22). There certainly was a sense in which the glory had departed from Israel, but it wasn't the glory of the ark of the covenant. The glory that departed was the glory of God's blessing upon and presence with an obedient Israel.

e. **The fire consumed the young men.... Their priests fell by the sword:** Asaph reminded Israel that the losses at Shiloh were more than just the ark of the covenant. There was also a great loss of life, including the priests (1Sa 4:10-22).

i. **Their maidens were not given in marriage:** "They had not been honoured with nuptial songs according to the customs of those times, see Jer 7:34; Jer 16:9; Jer 25:10. The meaning is, they had not been honourably married, because men were grown scarce by reason of the wars, Isa 4:1; Jer 31:22. Or, they had been married without any solemnity, like poor bond-women; or privately, as in

the time of public calamities.” (Diodati, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (65-66) *God’s triumph after Shiloh.*

**Then the Lord awoke as *from* sleep,
Like a mighty man who shouts because of wine.
And He beat back His enemies;
He put them to a perpetual reproach.**

a. **Then the Lord awoke as from sleep:** When the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant, they placed it as a trophy in the temple of their pagan god Dagon. Even while the symbol of His presence was captive in a pagan temple, God demonstrated His glory (1 Samuel 5).

i. **Like a mighty man:** “The renewal of his acts of mercy to Israel was so overwhelming that the psalmist likens God to a ‘hero’ (*gibbor*, NIV, ‘man’) who feels himself more heroic when intoxicated with wine (Psa 78:65).” (VanGemeren)

ii. “One who, going forth to meet his enemy, having taken a sufficiency of wine to refresh himself, and become a proper stimulus to his animal spirits, *shouts* – gives the *war-signal* for the *onset*; impatient to meet the foe, and sure of victory. The idea is not taken from the case of a *drunken man*. A person in such a state would be very unfit to meet his enemy, and could have little prospect of conquest.” (Clarke)

b. **He beat back His enemies:** The story of how God exalted Himself over the Philistines and **put them to a perpetual reproach** is found in 1 Samuel 5. In it all, God demonstrated that He was able to guard His glory when His people neglected His glory.

i. The King James Version translates the line from verse 66 *he smote his enemies in the hinder parts*. “**Smote his enemies in the hinder part**, with the

disease of the emerods, which was both painful and shameful. He caused them to perpetuate their own reproach by sending back the ark of God with their golden emerods, the lasting monuments of their shame." (Poole)

3. (67-72) The hopeful choice of Jerusalem and David.

**Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph,
And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,
But chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion which He loved.
And He built His sanctuary like the heights,
Like the earth which He has established forever.
He also chose David His servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds;
From following the ewes that had young He brought
him,
To shepherd Jacob His people,
And Israel His inheritance.
So he shepherded them according to the integrity of
his heart,
And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.**

a. **But chose the tribe of Judah:** Asaph explained how God did not choose the other tribes to be the home of **His sanctuary. He rejected the tent of Joseph**, and instead chose Jerusalem (**Mount Zion**) to be the spiritual center of Israel.

i. "There are always new beginnings with God. Ephraim is rejected, but here Judah is chosen. Shiloh is abandoned, but the ark is brought to Mount Zion." (Boice)

b. **He also chose David His servant:** In some ways Jerusalem was an unlikely choice to be the center of Israel. In the same pattern, **David** – the humble shepherd boy **following the ewes that had young** –

was God's choice **to shepherd Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance.**

c. **So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands:** Psalms 78 ends on a hopeful note. It concludes with recognition of and gratitude for the goodness of God in the **integrity** and **skillfulness** of David's rule.

i. **According to the integrity of his heart:** "David was upright before God, and never swerved in heart from the obedient worship of Jehovah. Whatever faults he had, he was unfeignedly sincere in his allegiance to Israel's superior king; he shepherded for God with honest heart." (Spurgeon)

ii. Like many aspects of David's rule, this was fulfilled in a much greater way in David's Greater Son, Jesus the Messiah. David's heart *mostly* had integrity; the heart of Jesus was perfect in integrity. David guided Israel with great skill; Jesus leads His people with perfect skill.

iii. "If Israel's record is her shame, God's persistent goodness emerges as her hope (and ours) for the unfinished story." (Kidner)

How Long, O Lord?

Psa 79:1 O God, the heathen have invaded your land. They have desecrated your holy Temple and left Jerusalem in ruins.

Psa 79:2 They left the bodies of your people for the vultures, the bodies of your servants for wild animals to eat.

Psa 79:3 They shed your people's blood like water; blood flowed like water all through Jerusalem, and no one was left to bury the dead.

Psa 79:4 The surrounding nations insult us; they laugh at us and mock us.

Psa 79:5 LORD, will you be angry with us forever? Will your anger continue to burn like fire?

Psa 79:6 Turn your anger on the nations that do not worship you, on the people who do not pray to you.

Psa 79:7 For they have killed your people; they have ruined your country.

Psa 79:8 Do not punish us for the sins of our ancestors. Have mercy on us now; we have lost all hope.

Psa 79:9 Help us, O God, and save us; rescue us and forgive our sins for the sake of your own honor.

Psa 79:10 Why should the nations ask us, "Where is your God?" Let us see you punish the nations for shedding the blood of your servants.

Psa 79:11 Listen to the groans of the prisoners, and by your great power free those who are condemned to die.

Psa 79:12 Lord, pay the other nations back seven times for all the insults they have hurled at you.

Psa 79:13 Then we, your people, the sheep of your flock, will thank you forever and praise you for all time to come.

Psalms 79:1-13

Psalms 79 – A Prayer from Conquered Exiles

*Psalms 79 is titled **A Psalm of Asaph**, though it was clearly written after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies. This event was so traumatic and important in the scope of Jewish history that it is described four times in the Hebrew Scriptures: 2 Kings 25, 2Ch 36:11-21, Jer 39:1-14, and Jeremiah 52. Since the Asaph most prominent in the Old Testament lived and served during the reigns of King David and King Solomon, this is likely a later Asaph.*

James Montgomery Boice (writing regarding Psalms 74) explains the concept of a later Asaph: "Either this is a later Asaph, which is not unlikely since the name might have been perpetuated among the temple musicians, or, more likely, the name was affixed to many psalms produced by this body of musicians. We know that the 'descendants of Asaph' were functioning as late as the reign of Josiah (2Ch 35:15)."

A. The devastation of Jerusalem.

1. (1-4) Jerusalem destroyed, the temple defiled.

**O God, the nations have come into Your inheritance;
Your holy temple they have defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem in heaps.
The dead bodies of Your servants
They have given as food for the birds of the heavens,
The flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth.
Their blood they have shed like water all around
Jerusalem,
And *there was no one to bury them.*
We have become a reproach to our neighbors,
A scorn and derision to those who are around us.**

a. **The nations have come into Your inheritance:**
The army that conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem was under the command of the king of Babylon. Yet like the armies of many ancient empires, it was made up of soldiers of many **nations** conquered by the Babylonians.

i. "It is the cry of amazement at sacrilegious intrusion; as if the poet were struck with horror. The stranger pollutes thine hallowed courts with his tread." (Spurgeon)

b. **Into Your inheritance:** The psalmist had the *land* of Israel in mind with the words, **Your inheritance**. The

conquering Babylonians came against the people of Judah, but **into** the land of Israel. That particular land was important to God, and therefore Asaph noted the crisis of that land being invaded by the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar and his armies.

c. **Your holy temple they have defiled:** The temple was **holy**, but now was **defiled**. Jerusalem once prospered, but now was **laid in heaps**. The **servants** of God were dead, and their corpses disgraced (**given as food for the birds of heaven... with no one to bury them**).

i. **Your servants...Your saints:** "Though famine, war, death, and exile were deserved punishments for Judah's sins (Lamentation 1:8-9), the people are still spoken of as the people of God. They are called 'your servants' and 'your saints.'" (VanGemeren)

ii. "To lie unburied was the final humiliation, as though one had departed unloved and of no account, as disposable as an animal." (Kidner)

iii. "Either they denied them the honour of burial or else they mangled their dead bodies, and exercised their rage upon them, as the Papists did upon Huss and Zwinglius, and many of the English martyrs. A barbarous practice." (Trapp)

d. **We have become a reproach to our neighbors:** The shocking and brutal fall of Jerusalem and Judah made the Israelites a disgrace, contemptible to the surrounding nations.

i. **A scorn and derision:** "To find mirth in others' miseries, and to exult over the ills of others, is worthy only of the devil and of those whose father he is. Thus the case is stated before the Lord, and it is a very deplorable one." (Spurgeon)

2. (5-7) *A prayer to turn away the anger of God.*

How long, LORD?

Will You be angry forever?

Will Your jealousy burn like fire?

Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You,

And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name.

For they have devoured Jacob,

And laid waste his dwelling place.

a. **How long, LORD:** In the midst of the catastrophe of the conquest of Judah and Jerusalem, Asaph asked the question that many sufferers among God's people ask. **How long** does not question the *why* of suffering, but in faith asks the *when* of suffering, and if it will last forever.

i. The disaster made Asaph question, but it did not make him an atheist. The question was still asked of God. "It was not easy to hold fast by the reality of God's special relation to a nation thus apparently deserted, but the psalmist's faith stood even such a strain, and is not dashed by a trace of doubt. Such times are the test and triumph of trust." (Maclaren)

ii. "The very fact of the song is a revelation of the underlying confidence in God. In distress the heart seeks its way back to some hiding place, and finds it in the name of God." (Morgan)

b. **Will you be angry forever?** Asaph expressed the heart of the devastated people of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem. In the years of Jeremiah's ministry many false prophets had told them that deliverance would come. Because they ignored God's true messenger (Jeremiah), judgment came upon His people and they were completely unprepared for it.

i. The good news was that God's anger and jealousy would not burn against His people forever. Jeremiah foretold the judgment to come, but he also told of restoration that would follow.

c. **Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You:** God would answer Asaph's prayer in time, when judgment came upon the Babylonian Empire and they were conquered by the Medes and Persians. Babylon **devoured Jacob** and was in turn devoured.

i. Verses 6 and 7 are remarkably similar to Jer 10:25. It's possible that Jeremiah influenced the author of this psalm.

ii. **His dwelling place:** Some take this as a reference to the temple, which was certainly destroyed in the conquest of Jerusalem. Yet it is more likely that it refers to the land of Israel itself, previously referred to as God's *inheritance* (verse 1).

B. The plea for rescue.

1. (8-10) *Rescue us for Your glory.*

**Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!
Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us,
For we have been brought very low.**

Help us, O God of our salvation,

For the glory of Your name;

And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins,

For Your name's sake!

Why should the nations say,

"Where *is* their God?"

Let there be known among the nations in our sight

The avenging of the blood of Your servants *which has been shed*.

a. **Do not remember former iniquities against us:**
Speaking on behalf of the exiled survivors, Asaph

humbled himself before God and admitted their sin against Him. They could no longer deny their sin; instead they could plead for forgiveness and for God's **tender mercies** to **come speedily**.

i. "The people were suffering the destruction of their entire civilization – politically, economically, socially, and religiously. Yet there is not the slightest suggestion that they did not actually deserve it, or that they did not deserve it continuing as long as it had." (Boice)

ii. The concept of **former iniquities** suggests a principle. "Sins accumulate against nations. Generations lay up stores of transgressions to be visited upon their successors; hence this urgent prayer." (Spurgeon)

b. **For we have been brought very low:** *Before* they were **brought very low**, they did not humbly repent. Now they were in the place to do it.

c. **For the glory of Your name:** Asaph wisely appealed to the **glory** of God in his prayer for help. The glory of Judah and Jerusalem had been shattered, yet God might move for His people in the interest of His own glory.

d. **Provide atonement for our sins:** This was another appropriate and wonderful confession of sin and dependence upon God for *His* **atonement**. Asaph knew that any man-made atonement would be useless; God must **provide atonement for our sins**.

i. **Provide atonement for our sins:** When the psalmist prayed this, the temple and the altar were destroyed. The normal sacrifices were impossible. He looked for a greater **atonement** that God Himself would provide (Gen 22:8-14).

e. **Where is their God?** Asaph made a slightly different appeal, still with an eye to God's glory. Asaph considered the custom of the **avenging of the blood** in his ancient culture, where the murder of a family member would be answered by the work of the *goel*, the avenger of blood. He asked God to put the nations to silence and display His active presence by acting as the avenger of blood on behalf of His people.

i. **Where is their God?** "So Turks at this day (when they have the better of Christians) cry, Where is the Christian's God?" (Trapp)

ii. "The singer sees God reigning and working salvation, but the nations cannot see this. Their only proof of God is that of the prosperity of His people. In the hour of their adversity the nations will say, Where is their God?" (Morgan)

iii. "Prayer is therefore here made by the faithful, that God, not to gratify any vindictive spirit of theirs, but to vindicate his own attributes, would break the teeth of the oppressor, and work a public and glorious salvation for his chosen." (Horne)

2. (11-12) *Have mercy on the condemned.*

**Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You;
According to the greatness of Your power
Preserve those who are appointed to die;
And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their
bosom
Their reproach with which they have reproached You,
O Lord.**

a. **Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You:** Asaph considered the misery of his many countrymen who were prisoners in Babylon, asking God to hear their **groaning** and to act on their behalf.

i. "At the time of the Exodus, God had seen the affliction of his people and had heard their groanings (Exo 2:24; Exo 6:5). The people in exile were not unlike those in Egypt. They too groaned for the moment of their deliverance." (VanGemeren)

b. **Preserve those who are appointed to die**: Asaph then considered those among the exiles in Babylon who were condemned to death, and asked that God **preserve** them.

i. Clarke says **those who are appointed to die** is literally "'...sons of death.' Either those who were condemned to death because of their crimes, or condemned to be destroyed by their oppressors. Both these senses apply to the Israelites: they were sons of death, i.e., worthy of death because of their sins against God; they were condemned to death or utter destruction, by their Babylonish enemies." (Clarke)

c. **Return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom**: Asaph's final request was that God deal with their conquerors with both justice and vengeance, returning to them **sevenfold** the agony they inflicted upon Judah and the same **reproach** they directed toward God Himself.

i. Sometimes **sevenfold** is simply a way of saying *abundantly* or *in great measure* (Gen 4:15, Isa 30:26).

ii. "They denied thine existence, mocked thy power, insulted thy worship, and destroyed thy house; up, therefore, O Lord, and make them feel to the full that thou art not to be mocked with impunity. Pour into their laps good store of shame because they dared insult the God of Israel." (Spurgeon)

3. (13) *A vow to give thanks.*

**So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture,
Will give You thanks forever;
We will show forth Your praise to all generations.**

a. **Your people and sheep of Your pasture:** After praying for rescue, protection, and vengeance, Asaph ended this psalm with grateful dependence upon God. He properly recognized God's place as Shepherd over His **people and sheep**.

b. **We will give You thanks forever:** As grateful sheep, they would declare their **thanks** and **praise** both now and in the future.

i. "This is rather a faith-filled anticipation of a brighter, future day when God's people will once again praise him with full hearts and with fresh memories of what he has done for them." (Boice)

Restore Us, O God

Psa 80:1 Listen to us, O Shepherd of Israel; hear us, leader of your flock. Seated on your throne above the winged creatures,

Psa 80:2 reveal yourself to the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Show us your strength; come and save us!

Psa 80:3 Bring us back, O God! Show us your mercy, and we will be saved!

Psa 80:4 How much longer, LORD God Almighty, will you be angry with your people's prayers?

Psa 80:5 You have given us sorrow to eat, a large cup of tears to drink.

Psa 80:6 You let the surrounding nations fight over our land; our enemies insult us.

Psa 80:7 Bring us back, Almighty God! Show us your mercy, and we will be saved!

Psa 80:8 You brought a grapevine out of Egypt; you drove out other nations and planted it in their land.

Psa 80:9 You cleared a place for it to grow; its roots went deep, and it spread out over the whole land.

Psa 80:10 It covered the hills with its shade; its branches overshadowed the giant cedars.

Psa 80:11 It extended its branches to the Mediterranean Sea and as far as the Euphrates River.

Psa 80:12 Why did you break down the fences around it? Now anyone passing by can steal its grapes;

Psa 80:13 wild hogs trample it down, and wild animals feed on it.

Psa 80:14 Turn to us, Almighty God! Look down from heaven at us; come and save your people!

Psa 80:15 Come and save this grapevine that you planted, this young vine you made grow so strong!

Psa 80:16 Our enemies have set it on fire and cut it down; look at them in anger and destroy them!

Psa 80:17 Preserve and protect the people you have chosen, the nation you made so strong.

Psa 80:18 We will never turn away from you again; keep us alive, and we will praise you.

Psa 80:19 Bring us back, LORD God Almighty. Show us your mercy, and we will be saved.

Psalms 80:1-19

Psalms 80 – Restoring Israel, the Sheep and Vineyard of the LORD

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies."** A Testimony of Asaph. A Psalm. As with Psalms 45, 60, 69, this psalm is **Set to "The Lilies."** The phrase may refer to the general beauty of the composition, to the*

tune, or even to a six-stringed instrument known as the Shoshannim (the literal translation of the Hebrew).

As with several of the Asaph psalms, this one is often attributed to a later Asaph. "Here not only the southern kingdom but also the northern kingdom – it calls God the 'Shepherd of Israel' and speaks of Ephraim and Manasseh, two of the major northern tribes – and since it asks for Israel's deliverance, it is best seen as a plea for the deliverance of the northern kingdom sometime before its fall to the Assyrian armies in 721 B.C." (James Montgomery Boice)

"A later Asaph we should suppose, who had the unhappiness to live, like the 'last minstrel,' in evil times. If by the Asaph of David's day, this Psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. Israel's Shepherd and sorrow.

1. (1-3) A prayer to Israel's Shepherd for restoration.

**Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
You who lead Joseph like a flock;
You who dwell *between* the cherubim, shine forth!
Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
Stir up Your strength,
And come *and* save us!
Restore us, O God;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!**

a. **Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel:** The image of a king or ruler over a people being regarded as the *shepherd* was common in the ancient world. Asaph rightly understood that in a special and wonderful way, Yahweh was the **Shepherd of Israel**. It was He who had and would **lead Joseph like a flock**.

i. "Although appearing frequently elsewhere, the idea of God being Israel's shepherd occurs in the Psalter only twice, here and in Psalms 23." (Boice)

ii. "The name is full of tenderness, and hence is selected by the troubled Psalmist: broken hearts delight in names of grace." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Shepherd of Israel:** "Thou that feedest thy people, watchest over them, defendest, redeemest, reducest them; thou that handlest them, curest them, wastest them, drivest them as they are able to go, carriest them in thy bosom, doest all the offices of a good shepherd for them." (Trapp)

iv. "'Shepherd of Israel' reminds us of Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh in which he invoked 'the God who shepherded me all my life long' to 'bless the lads,' and of the title in Gen 49:24, 'the shepherd, the stone of Israel.'" (Maclaren)

v. Because of the prominence of Joseph among his brothers, and because of the size of the tribes of the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh), sometimes the Scriptures refer to all of Israel as **Joseph** (Eze 37:16; Eze 37:19; Amo 5:6; Amo 5:15; Amo 6:6; Zec 10:6; Psa 81:5; Oba 1:18).

b. **You who dwell between the cherubim:** This refers to two aspects. The lesser aspect is the presence of God as connected with the ark of the covenant and the institution of the tabernacle/temple. The greater aspect is the recognition that in heaven and its reality, God does **dwell between the cherubim**.

c. **You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth:** Asaph asked that the God of this majesty and glory would **shine forth** on behalf of His people. When

God does **shine forth**, darkness and gloom vanish and He is magnified.

d. **Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh:** In the order of arrangement around the tabernacle and in the order of march, these three tribes were grouped together on the east side of the tabernacle (Numbers 2, 10).

i. "These three tribes went next after the ark, when it removed, Num 2:18-24; Num 10:22-24." (Trapp)

e. **Stir up Your strength, and come and save us:** The God mighty enough to shepherd Israel and bring the people from Egypt to Canaan was strong enough to deliver them in their present crisis – *if* His **strength** was stirred. This was a prayer of faith, understanding, and dependence.

f. **Restore us, O God:** This begins a refrain that is repeated three times in this psalm (verse 3, 7, and 19). It expressed trust and dependence upon God, and confidence that His favor (shown by His shining **face**) was all that was needed for Israel's restoration and blessing.

i. "It is not so much said, '*turn* our captivity' but turn '*us*.' All will come right if we are right. The best turn is not that of circumstances but of character. When the Lord turns his people he will soon turn their condition." (Spurgeon)

ii. Spurgeon saw in this line and the following a description of the factors in revival. First there is the restoration or turning of the people to God, and then there is the radiant face of God, shining in all the goodness of His presence. In those two combined we see the work of true revival happen.

iii. "I want to see those times again, when first the refreshing showers came down from heaven. Have you never heard that under one of Whitfield's sermons there have been as many as two thousand saved? He was a great man; but God can use the little, as well as the great to produce the same effect; and why should there not be souls saved here, beyond all our dreams?" (Spurgeon)

g. **Cause Your face to shine:** This goes back to the blessing the priests were commanded to proclaim to the people of Israel (Num 6:24-26). It has the idea of God's presence, pleasure, and favor.

i. "The psalmist must have heard this blessing a thousand times. So he prays here, 'Make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.'" (Boice)

ii. "Our greatest dread is the withdrawal of the Lord's presence, and our brightest hope is the prospect of his return. In the darkest times of Israel, the light of her Shepherd's countenance is all she needs." (Spurgeon)

iii. **We shall be saved:** "To be 'saved' means here to be rescued from the assaults of hostile nations. The poet was sure that Israel's sole defence was God, and that one gleam of His face would shrivel up the strongest foes." (Maclaren)

2. (4-7) *God's anger makes His people sorrowful.*

**O LORD God of hosts,
How long will You be angry
Against the prayer of Your people?
You have fed them with the bread of tears,
And given them tears to drink in great measure.
You have made us a strife to our neighbors,
And our enemies laugh among themselves.**

**Restore us, O God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!**

a. **O LORD God of hosts, how long will You be angry?** Asaph's heart poured out in sorrow before God. It is a terrible thing to sense that God is **angry** and that He is **against the prayer** of His people. The sorrow is deeper when it is recognized that it is the God of heavenly armies, the **LORD God of hosts**, who has in some way set Himself against His people.

i. "The rendering 'wilt Thou be angry?' is but a feeble reproduction of the vigorous original, which runs 'wilt Thou smoke?' Other psalms (e.g., Psa 74:1) speak of God's anger as smoking but here the figure is applied to God Himself." (Maclaren)

ii. **Against the prayer:** "That God should be angry with us when sinning seems natural enough, but that he should be angry even with our prayers is a bitter grief." (Spurgeon)

b. **Tears to drink in great measure:** Asaph used the metaphor of drinking tears to express the great sorrow of God's people. Psa 42:3 uses a similar image: *My tears have been my food day and night.*

i. "There cannot be a more striking picture of Sion in captivity. Her bread is dipped in tears, and her cup is filled to the brim with them: no time is free from grief and lamentation." (Horne)

c. **Our enemies laugh among themselves:** The mocking and taunting of Israel's enemies were painful for Asaph and the people of God in their low condition. It stung to be **strife** to their neighbors, and to hear their mocking laugh.

i. **A strife to our neighbors:** "Always jealous and malicious, Edom and Moab exulted over Israel's troubles, and then fell to disputing about their share of the spoil." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The psalmist points to an angry God, a weeping nation, and mocking foes, a trilogy of woe." (Maclaren)

d. **Restore us, O God:** Asaph repeats and strengthens the refrain from verse 3, adding **of hosts**, emphasizing His power and authority. Fresh expression of their misery made for a fresh prayer for restoration and rescue by the shining, approving face of God.

B. Israel as a vine.

1. (8-11) *The vine of Israel is planted in the Promised Land.*

**You have brought a vine out of Egypt;
You have cast out the nations, and planted it.
You prepared *room* for it,
And caused it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
The hills were covered with its shadow,
And the mighty cedars with its boughs.
She sent out her boughs to the Sea,
And her branches to the River.**

a. **You have brought a vine out of Egypt:** The **vine** is a familiar picture of Israel in the Old Testament. This vine was transplanted from **Egypt** and brought into the Promised Land. In Canaan, God **planted it**, making **room** by casting out the Canaanite nations.

i. Many passages of the Old Testament speak of Israel as **a vine**: Deu 32:32-33, Isa 5:1, Jer 2:21, Eze 17:5-6, Hos 10:1, and Joe 1:7. The New Testament also applies the figure to Israel (Mat 20:1,

Mat 21:33, Mar 12:1), and then more broadly to the people of God in general.

ii. "The vine is a plant weak and lowly, and needing support; when supported, wild and luxuriant, unless restrained by the pruning-knife; capable of producing the most valuable fruit, but if barren, the most unprofitable among trees, and fit only for the flames." (Horne)

b. Caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land:

The vine of Israel was blessed in the Promised Land. Under God's blessing they took **deep root** and **filled the land** in a way that the variety of Canaanite tribes had not. It grew so strong and secure in the land that it did what was botanically impossible in a literal sense: the vine grew big as **the mighty cedars** and cast its **shadow** upon the hills.

i. "The figure is carried out with much beauty in detail. The Exodus was the vine's transplanting; the destruction of the Canaanites was the grubbing up of weeds to clear the ground for it; the numerical increase of the people was its making roots and spreading far." (Maclaren)

c. She sent out her boughs to the Sea, and her branches to the River: At its height under King David and King Solomon, Israel's domination stretched from the Mediterranean Sea (**the Sea**) to the Euphrates **River**.

i. This broad dominion of Israel was promised in Exo 23:31 and Deu 11:24. 1Ki 4:21 shows it was fulfilled by the reign of Solomon, who inherited David's dominion.

2. (12-13) The unprotected vineyard.

**Why have You broken down her hedges,
So that all who pass by the way pluck her *fruit*?
The boar out of the woods uproots it,
And the wild beast of the field devours it.**

a. **Why have You broken down her hedges?** In ancient Israel a vineyard was often surrounded by a thick and thorny hedge that kept out thieves and wild animals. Asaph looked at Israel's troubled state and could see that the symbolic **hedges** were **broken down** by the hand of God.

b. **All who pass by the way pluck her fruit:** Without protection of God's **hedges**, the land of Israel was ready to be plundered and devoured by her enemies.

c. **The boar out of the woods uproots it:** Wild boars are noted for their destruction, and can quickly lay waste to a vineyard. The enemies of God are pictured as such wild, destructive beasts.

i. "No image of a destructive enemy could be more appropriate than that which is used. We have read of the little foxes that spoil the vines, but the *wild boar* is a much more destructive enemy, breaking its way through fences, rooting up the ground, tearing down the vines themselves, and treading them under its feet. A single party of these animals will sometimes destroy an entire vineyard in a single night." (Wood, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. In 1520, as Martin Luther rose in prominence as a reformer, Pope Leo X published a condemnation of Luther and his work known as *Exsurge domini*. In the opening paragraph, he used this image from Psalms 80 : "At thy ascension into heaven thou hast commanded the care, rule and administration of this vineyard to Peter as head and to thy representatives, his successors, as the Church triumphant. A roaring

boar of the woods has undertaken to destroy this vineyard, a wild beast wants to devour it."

3. (14-16) *A prayer for God to take pity upon the desolate vine.*

**Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;
Look down from heaven and see,
And visit this vine
And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted,
And the branch *that* You made strong for Yourself.
*It is burned with fire, it is cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.***

a. **Return, we beseech You:** With an earnest plea Asaph prayed on behalf of the nation, begging God to **return** to them, to **look** upon the greatness of their need and to **visit this vine** that He Himself had planted.

i. "The suffering of the people is due to their own sin in turning away from God as Shepherd, Husbandman, and King. Their restoration can come only as He turns them back to Himself." (Morgan)

ii. **Visit this vine...and the branch that You made strong:** "A prayer for the leader whom the Lord had raised up, or for the Messiah whom they expected." (Spurgeon)

b. **It is burned with fire, it is cut down:** The great desolation of this vine came from the **rebuke** of God Himself, **the rebuke of Your countenance.**

4. (17-19) *Restoration in the Man of God's Right Hand.*

**Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* You made strong for Yourself.
Then we will not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.
Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;**

**Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!**

a. **Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand:** In Israel's low place, Asaph knew that the nation needed *leadership*. He asked God to be with and to bless (**Let Your hand be upon**) a particular man – the **man** of God's right hand. Perhaps Asaph had first in mind the present king of Israel; but ultimately the Man of God's Right Hand is Jesus Christ (Eph 1:20, Heb 8:1).

i. "Nations rise or fall largely through the instrumentality of individuals: by a Napoleon the kingdoms are scourged, and by a Wellington nations are saved from the tyrant. It is by the man Christ Jesus that fallen Israel is yet to rise, and indeed through him, who deigns to call himself the Son of Man, the world is to be delivered from the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin." (Spurgeon)

ii. **The man of Your right hand:** "The only person who can be said to be at the right hand of God as intercessor, is JESUS THE MESSIAH. Let him become our Deliverer: appoint him for this purpose, and let his strength be manifested in our weakness! By whom are the Jews to be restored, if indeed they ever be restored to their own land, but by JESUS CHRIST? By HIM alone can they find mercy; through HIM *alone* can they ever be reconciled to God." (Clarke)

b. **Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself:** Again, this was likely prayed with reference to the present king of Israel. Yet the ultimate **Son of Man** was Jesus Christ, who received God's strength as a submitted Son to His Father in heaven.

c. **Then we will not turn back from You:** In the strength of this Son of Man made strong, this Man of God's Right Hand, God's people would be restored to

faithfulness. They would be revived and once again call upon His name.

i. **Revive us:** "Only the Lord can 'revive' (Psa 80:18) the people by forgiveness of their sins, by renewal of the covenant, and by driving out the enemies. This is not merely a prayer for deliverance from the enemy but an urgent petition for the blessings of God." (VanGemeren)

d. **Restore us, O LORD God of hosts:** The refrain is repeated a third and final time, yet this time adding Yahweh, the covenant name of God (**LORD God of hosts**). Under the leadership of God's great Messiah, God's people *would* be restored and once again know the shining radiance of God's face. They would be rescued.

i. **Cause Your face to shine:** "Both for Israel and the Church this prayer has been answered in Christ. In Him we may be restored to God. In Him, the face of God is shining upon us in grace." (Morgan)

Oh, That My People Would Listen to Me

Psa 81:1 Shout for joy to God our defender; sing praise to the God of Jacob!

Psa 81:2 Start the music and beat the tambourines; play pleasant music on the harps and the lyres.

Psa 81:3 Blow the trumpet for the festival, when the moon is new and when the moon is full.

Psa 81:4 This is the law in Israel, an order from the God of Jacob.

Psa 81:5 He gave it to the people of Israel when he attacked the land of Egypt. I hear an unknown voice saying,

Psa 81:6 "I took the burdens off your backs; I let you put down your loads of bricks.

Psa 81:7 When you were in trouble, you called to me, and I saved you. From my hiding place in the storm, I answered you. I put you to the test at the springs of Meribah.

Psa 81:8 Listen, my people, to my warning; Israel, how I wish you would listen to me!

Psa 81:9 You must never worship another god.

Psa 81:10 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. Open your mouth, and I will feed you.

Psa 81:11 "But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not obey me.

Psa 81:12 So I let them go their stubborn ways and do whatever they wanted.

Psa 81:13 How I wish my people would listen to me; how I wish they would obey me!

Psa 81:14 I would quickly defeat their enemies and conquer all their foes.

Psa 81:15 Those who hate me would bow in fear before me; their punishment would last forever.

Psa 81:16 But I would feed you with the finest wheat and satisfy you with wild honey."

Psalms 81:1-16

Psalms 81 – Gathering God’s People to Listen and Obey

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm of Asaph.** It indicates the audience of the psalm (**the Chief Musician**), the author of the psalm (**of Asaph**) and the sound of the psalm (**on the instrument of Gath**). This psalm is best connected with the Feast of Trumpets or the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated by the people of Israel.*

"This powerful psalm leaves no doubt of its festal character, and little doubt of the particular feast it was designed to

serve: in a probability the Feast of Tabernacles. This commemorated the wilderness journey, and included a public reading of the law.” (Derek Kidner)

A. A trumpet call to Israel.

1. (1-2) A call to praise God in song.

**Sing aloud to God our strength;
Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.
Raise a song and strike the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the lute.**

a. **Sing aloud to God our strength:** Asaph knew it was good for God’s people to hear the exhortation to **sing aloud**. We should honor God with singing, and our songs are sung **aloud**.

i. “It is to be regretted that the niceties of modern singing frighten our congregations from joining lustily in the hymns. For our part we delight in full bursts of praise, and had rather discover the ruggedness of a want of musical training than miss the heartiness of universal congregational song. The gentility which lisps the tune in wellbred whispers, or leaves the singing altogether to the choir, is very like a mockery of worship.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Make a joyful shout:** There is a place for songs rich with awe, reverence, or contrition, but never to the exclusion of songs that **make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob**.

c. **Raise a song and strike the timbrel:** As the song unto God is raised, so should skillful music from instruments. Asaph listed three: **the timbrel, the pleasant harp, and the lute**.

i. “The mention of the tambourine [**timbrel**] suggests that the people danced while singing praise.” (VanGemeren)

ii. "Franz Delitzsch, one of the great German commentators, points out that the summons in verse 1 is to the whole congregation; the summons in verse 2 is to the Levites, who were the appointed temple singers and musicians; and the summons in verse 3 is to the priests who had the specific task of blowing the trumpets." (Boice)

2. (3-5) *The call to gather the people of God.*

**Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon,
At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.
For this *is* a statute for Israel,
A law of the God of Jacob.
This He established in Joseph as a testimony,
When He went throughout the land of Egypt,
Where I heard a language I did not understand.**

a. **Blow the trumpet:** The previous verse mentioned musical instruments, but the trumpet was not mentioned as an instrument to accompany praise. The purpose of this **trumpet** was to call God's people together for their **solemn feast day** at the **New Moon**.

i. "The word for trumpet is *shophar* (*sopar*), the ram's horn such as sounded the attack at Jericho and in Gideon's battle, and which announced certain festal days." (Kidner)

ii. "Here the reference to *the new moon*, or 'the new month' (New English Bible), points to the seventh month, which was the climax of the festal year and was ushered in with the sound of this horn." (Kidner)

iii. "On the September new moon, the first day of the seventh month, was kept a great festival, called the 'feast of trumpets;' Lev 23:24, Num 29:1; which probably is here intended.... The tenth of the same month was the great day of atonement; and on the

fifteenth was celebrated the feast of tabernacles.”
(Horne)

b. **This is a statute for Israel:** This stresses the *importance* of gathering God’s people together. It was **a statute**, a **law**, and **established** as a **testimony** among God’s people.

i. One such **statute** is found in Num 10:10 : *Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God.*

ii. “No time is amiss for praising God.... But some are times appointed, not for God to meet us (He is always ready) but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising God.” (Henry, cited in Kidner)

c. **When He went throughout the land of Egypt:** Asaph thought of the great assembly of God’s people as they came together to leave their slavery in Egypt. They gathered together for that initial deliverance, and it became the basis for their future assemblies and feasts.

i. **I heard a language I did not understand:** “the Egyptian language, which at first was very ungrateful and unknown to the Israelites, Gen 42:23, and probably continued so for some considerable time, because they were much separated both in place and conversation from the Egyptians, through Joseph’s pious and prudent design.” (Poole)

B. God speaks to His assembled people.

1. (6-7) *God describes how He delivered and tested Israel.*

**"I removed his shoulder from the burden;
His hands were freed from the baskets.
You called in trouble, and I delivered you;
I answered you in the secret place of thunder;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah**

a. **I removed his shoulder from the burden:** In the first part of the psalm, a call went to God's people to gather, suggested by their first gathering as a people as slaves in Egypt. Now God speaks to His gathered people and begins with reminding them of the great deliverance He gave them in setting them free from their slavery.

i. "This psalm was a most appropriate 'invitation' to covenant renewal during the feast, when God's people reflected on all his acts in the past."
(VanGemeren)

ii. "Let us remember, that we have been eased of far heavier burdens, delivered from severer task-masters, and freed from a baser drudgery; the intolerable load of sin, the cruel tyranny of Satan."
(Horne)

b. **You called in trouble, and I delivered you:** God will hear those who cry out to Him. God heard the groaning of Israel under their burden of slavery in Egypt (Exo 2:23-24). He brought deliverance to them through wonders and leaders like Moses.

i. "*The secret place of thunder* was Sinai, shrouded in smoke and terrible with the voice of God (Exo 19:16 ff; Exo 20:18 ff.). It was education by encounter."
(Kidner)

c. **I tested you at the waters of Meribah:** God not only delivered Israel, but He also trained them, and the testing at Meribah was an example of this. At Meribah,

God miraculously provided water for a complaining and unbelieving Israel (Exo 17:1-7).

i. "The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion." (Spurgeon)

2. (8-12) *God's rejected call to Israel.*

**"Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you!
O Israel, if you will listen to Me!
There shall be no foreign god among you;
Nor shall you worship any foreign god.
I *am* the LORD your God,
Who brought you out of the land of Egypt;
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.
"But My people would not heed My voice,
And Israel would *have* none of Me.
So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart,
To walk in their own counsels.**

a. **Hear, O My people:** Before God instructed His assembled people, He first called for their attention, telling them to **listen**.

i. "What a strange anomaly: a happy, joyfully worshipping congregation and a neglected and offended God." (Boice)

ii. "God looks for listeners as well as singers, on whom the sober lessons of the wilderness will not be lost." (Kidner)

b. **There shall be no foreign god among you:** Some 400 years of slavery in Egypt exposed Israel to the many pagan gods of Egypt. The command God gave to Israel when the Israelites came out of Egypt is again stated to them in the days of Asaph. Coming from Egypt, Israel

was commanded not to **worship any foreign god**, and the same command was for Israel in the land under their kings.

i. "The problem is not that the world does not know God. How can we expect it to? The problem is that the people of God do not know God, or at least they do not act like they do. Instead of worshipping the Lord and him only, Christians seem to be worshipping the gods of the secular culture – gods of wealth, pleasure, fame, status, and self-absorption." (Boice)

c. **I am the LORD your God:** God's command to put away every foreign god was entirely reasonable. He was Yahweh (**the LORD**), the covenant God of Israel. He was the one who **brought** them **out of the land of Egypt**. No foreign god had done such things for Israel.

i. "No other god had done anything for the Jews, and therefore they had no reason for paying homage to any other. To us the same argument will apply. We owe all to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the world, the flesh, the devil, none of these have been of any service to us; they are aliens, foreigners, enemies, and it is not for us to bow down before them." (Spurgeon)

d. **Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it:** God made a promise to His faithful people. If they would in faith anticipate God's provision, God would provide. The reverse is also implied: God would not **fill** the closed mouth, the one with no anticipation of faith.

i. "When the mother-bird brings food she never has to ask the little ones to open their mouths wide; her only difficulty is to fill the great width which they are quite sure to present to her: appetite and eagerness are never lacking, they are utterly insatiable...picture

a nest of little birds reaching up their mouths, and all opening them as wide as they can." (Spurgeon)

ii. This shows us that whatever we do open to God, He will fill. We can't open our mouths bigger than He can fill.

- We open our mouths wide when we have a sense of need – when we are hungry.
- We open our mouths wide when we ask for large things.
- We open our mouths wide when we understand the greatness of the God we pray to.
- We open our mouths wide when we pray on Jesus' merits, not our own.

iii. "You may easily over-expect the creature, but you cannot over-expect God, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;' widen and dilate the desires and expectations of your souls, and God is able to fill every chink to the vastest capacity. This honours God, when we greaten our expectation upon him; it is a sanctifying of God in our hearts." (Case, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "That great saying teaches, too, that God's bestowals are practically measured by men's capacity and desire. The ultimate limit of them is His own limitless grace; but the working limit in each individual is the individual's receptivity, of which his expectancy and desire are determining factors." (Maclaren)

v. "Our cup is small, and we blame the fountain." (Spurgeon)

e. **But My people would not heed My voice:** This was the great tragedy. God was ready to fill the faith-filled open mouths of His people, but they would not obey Him.

God said in sorrow, **"Israel would have none of Me."** Rebellious Israel rejected God who had done so much for them *and* would have done much more.

f. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart:

This was God's judgment against His unbelieving people – to give **them over to their own stubborn heart**, to **walk in their own counsels**. One of the greatest judgments God can bring is to simply leave us alone to our own stubbornness and foolishness.

i. John Trapp thought it was as if God had "left them as a ship without a rudder; as a horse without reins, to go whither they would, and do what they would."
(Trapp)

ii. "It reveals a constant method of God with His disloyal and disobedient children. When they will not go His way, He lets them go their way.... He permits them to learn by the bitter results of their own folly what He would have had them know by communion with Himself." (Morgan)

iii. "When we see men enabled, by wealth and power, to accomplish the inordinate desires of their hearts, and carry their worldly schemes into execution, without meeting any obstructions in their way, we are apt to envy their felicity; whereas such prosperity in wickedness is the surest mark of divine displeasure, the heaviest punishment of disobedience, both in individuals and communities." (Horne)

3. (13-16) God's sorrow over stubborn Israel.

**"Oh, that My people would listen to Me,
That Israel would walk in My ways!
I would soon subdue their enemies,
And turn My hand against their adversaries.
The haters of the Lord would pretend submission to**

**Him,
But their fate would endure forever.
He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat;
And with honey from the rock I would have satisfied
you."**

a. **Oh, that My people would listen to Me:** The tragedy is ironic. God could say of Israel, **My people**. They belonged to Him and He had claimed them. Yet they would not **listen** to Him; they would not **walk in** His ways. There is a sense of longing in these words: God's desire to bless His people and do good for them.

i. "The affectionate tone of these verses is also worth noting in the context of judgment: it is something of an Old Testament counterpart to the lament for Jerusalem (Mat 23:37)."

 (Kidner)

b. **I would soon subdue their enemies:** This was an unclaimed blessing God wanted to give to a believing, obeying people. If God's people would only listen and obey, God would **subdue their enemies** and fight for them **against their adversaries**.

i. "Our enemies find the sharpest weapons against us in the armoury of our transgressions. They could never overthrow us if we did not first overthrow ourselves. Sin strips a man of his armour, and leaves him naked to his enemies." (Spurgeon)

c. **I would have satisfied you:** This psalm ends on a sad note, filled with the tragedy of missed opportunity and unfulfilled potential. God would have richly provided for them and **satisfied them** – *if* His people would have only listened and obeyed.

Rescue the Weak and Needy

Psa 82:1 God presides in the heavenly council; in the assembly of the gods he gives his decision:

Psa 82:2 "You must stop judging unjustly; you must no longer be partial to the wicked!

Psa 82:3 Defend the rights of the poor and the orphans; be fair to the needy and the helpless.

Psa 82:4 Rescue them from the power of evil people.

Psa 82:5 "How ignorant you are! How stupid! You are completely corrupt, and justice has disappeared from the world.

Psa 82:6 'You are gods,' I said; 'all of you are children of the Most High.'

Psa 82:7 But you will die like mortals; your life will end like that of any prince."

Psa 82:8 Come, O God, and rule the world; all the nations are yours.

Psalms 82:1-8

Psalms 82 – Earthly Judges Before the Great Judge

*This psalm is titled **A Psalm of Asaph**. The author **Asaph** was probably the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.*

"It takes us in a few words behind and beyond our present wrongs, to portray God's unbounded jurisdiction, his delegation of power, his diagnosis of our condition and his drastic intentions." (Derek Kidner)

A. God summons the judges.

1. (1-2) God questions the unjust judges.

God stands in the congregation of the mighty;

He judges among the gods.

How long will you judge unjustly,

And show partiality to the wicked? Selah

a. **God stands in the congregation of the mighty:** Asaph gives us the picture of God in the midst of **the mighty**, standing in authority.

i. "**Standeth**, as a judge, diligently to observe all that is said or done there; and to give sentence accordingly. The judge sits when he heareth causes, but standeth up when he giveth sentence." (Poole)

b. **He judges among the gods:** God's standing in the midst of these **mighty** ones is to bring judgment **among** them. The word **gods** here is *Elohim*, the plural for the generic word for *god* in Hebrew. The idea of God judging **gods** has led to several suggestions regarding the identity of these *elohim*, these **gods**.

- *Elohim* is often used to describe the true God, Yahweh. It is in the plural to describe both the majesty of His person, and to be a hint of the triune nature of God, being One God in Three Persons.
- *Elohim* is sometimes used as the plural of pagan deities, the false gods of the nations.
- *Elohim* is sometimes used in reference to angelic beings.
- *Elohim* is here best taken as a reference to human judges, who stand in the place of God in their ability to determine the fate of others.

i. "Gathered around Him is an assembly of judges who are called *elohim*, because they are His delegates; they administer His will; they are His executive agents." (Morgan)

ii. "The judges and magistrates are compared in this psalm to God, because they exercise something of His power in the right ordering of human society." (Meyer)

iii. Martin Luther “pointed out that Psa 82:1; Psa 82:6 both establishes and limits the authority of princes. It establishes it, because it is God who appoints the authorities; it is he who calls them ‘gods.’ It limits their authority because they are accountable to him, as the psalm shows.” (Boice)

iv. “Earthly judicatories are the appointment of God. All magistrates act in his name, and by virtue of his commission. He is invisibly present at their assemblies, and superintends their proceedings. He receives appeals from their wrongful decisions; he will one day re-hear all causes at his own tribunal, and reverse every iniquitous sentence, before the great congregation of men and angels.” (Horne)

v. “Our Lord’s reference to Psa 82:6 in Joh 10:34-38 is, by the present writer, accepted as authoritatively settling both the meaning and the ground of the remarkable name of ‘gods’ for human judges.” (Maclaren)

c. **How long will you judge unjustly?** As God calls together this assembly of judges, He did not do it to compliment them or pay them honor. He did it to confront them for judging **unjustly** and for showing **partiality to the wicked**. This confrontation shows that God Himself is the Judge at the ultimate Supreme Court.

i. “The judges in mind have erred in that they have shown respect for the persons of the wicked, and thus departed from that strict justice which ever characterises the dealings of God to Whom they are all responsible.” (Morgan)

ii. “Will ye represent and express God to the world as a corrupt, crooked, and unrighteous judge?” (Trapp)

iii. "Our village squires and country magistrates would do well to remember this. Some of them had need go to school to Asaph till they have mastered this psalm. Their harsh decisions and strange judgments are made in the presence of him who will surely visit them for every unseemly act, for he has no respect unto the person of any, and is the champion of the poor and needy." (Spurgeon)

d. **Selah**: The idea of God calling the judges of the earth into special judgment is worthy of sober reflection.

i. **Selah**: "This gives the offenders pause for consideration and confession." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) *God commands the unjust judges.*

Defend the poor and fatherless;

Do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Deliver the poor and needy;

Free *them* from the hand of the wicked.

a. **Defend the poor and fatherless**: God's instruction to the judges of this earth is to do their duty in *defending* those who are often treated unjustly. In Asaph's day the **poor and the fatherless** were often the targets of unfair treatment. It was the job of the judges to **defend** them and to **do justice to the afflicted and needy**.

i. "You [judges] are their natural *protectors* under God. They are *oppressed*: *punish* their *oppressors*, however rich or powerful: and *deliver them*." (Clarke)

ii. "These...three verses, indeed the whole psalm, every prince should have painted on the wall of his chamber, on his bed, over his table, and on his garments. For here they find what lofty, princely, noble virtues their estate can practice, so that temporal government, next to the preaching office, is

the highest service to God and the most useful office on earth.” (Luther, cited in Boice)

b. **Free them from the hand of the wicked:** One characteristic of the **wicked** is that they prey upon **the poor and needy**. It was the divinely directed duty of judges to **free** the vulnerable from those who oppressed them.

i. “Law has too often been an instrument for vengeance in the hand of unscrupulous men, an instrument as deadly as poison or the dagger. It is for the judge to prevent such villainy.” (Spurgeon)

ii. King Jehoshaphat of Judah gave similar wise instruction to judges in 2Ch 19:6-7 : *And said to the judges, “Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.”*

iii. “It is said of Francis the First, of France, that when a woman kneeled to him to beg justice, he bade her stand up; for, said he, Woman, it is justice that I owe thee, and justice thou shalt have; if thou beg anything of me, let it be mercy.” (Price, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (5) *God exposes the weakness of the unjust judges.*

They do not know, nor do they understand;

They walk about in darkness;

All the foundations of the earth are unstable.

a. **They do not know, nor do they understand:** This should best be understood as a reference to the unjust judges themselves. Despite their high standing and

higher opinion of themselves, they are often ignorant and easily overestimate their own understanding.

i. "They **know not**, to wit, the truth and right of the cause, nor the duty of their place. Men are oft said in Scripture *not to know* what they do not love and practise." (Poole)

ii. Adam Clarke had a much better opinion of the judges of his own time (1822), but he understood the application to the judges in Asaph's day: "They are ignorant and do not wish to be instructed. They will not learn; they cannot teach. Happy England! How different from Judea...in the days of Jehoshaphat! All thy judges are learned, righteous, and impartial. Never did greater men in their profession dignify any land or country." (Clarke)

b. All the foundations of the earth are unstable:

When judges walk in the **darkness** of their arrogant pride, the lives of everyday people are uncertain and unstable, as if the ground that should be firm under their feet is shaking.

i. Boice mentioned three perils that are the destined doom for governments that forget God:

- Ignorance (**they do not know**).
- Inept action (**they walk about in darkness**).
- A society shaken (**all the foundations of the earth are unstable**).

ii. "There is nothing the world needs today more than the administration of strict and impartial justice." (Morgan)

iii. "When peasants may be horsewhipped by farmers with impunity, and a pretty bird is thought more precious than poor men, the foundations of the earth

are indeed sinking like rotten piles unable to bear up the structures built upon them." (Spurgeon)

iv. "A community, whether ecclesiastical or civil, consisteth of great numbers; but its well-being dependeth on a few, in whose hands the administration is placed." (Horne)

B. God sentences the judges.

1. (6-7) *God pronounces judgment on the unjust judges.*

**I said, "You *are* gods,
And all of you *are* children of the Most High.
But you shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes."**

a. **You are gods:** These human judges stood in the place of the gods above other people. They had the opportunity and the authority to change people's lives with a word, or sometimes even to end a life.

i. In Joh 10:34-39 Jesus quoted verse 6 in a debate with religious leaders when they accused Him of claiming to be God in a sinful, wrong way. Jesus reasoned, "If God gave these unjust judges the title 'gods' because of their office, why do you consider it blasphemy that I call Myself the 'Son of God' in light of the testimony of Me and My works?"

ii. Exo 21:6; Exo 22:8-9 are other passages where God called earthly judges **gods**. In verse 6, **gods** translates the Hebrew word *elohim*. In Exo 21:6; Exo 22:8-9 the same word *elohim* is translated "judges."

iii. "There must be some government among men, and as angels are not sent to dispense it, God allows men to rule over men, and endorses their office." (Spurgeon)

iv. "In his *Lex Rex*, Rutherford argues from this psalm that judges are not the creatures of kings, to execute their pleasure, and do not derive their power from the monarch, but are authorized by God himself as much as the king, and are therefore bound to execute justice whether the monarch desires it or no." (Spurgeon)

b. **And all of you are children of the Most High:** In still speaking to Israel's earthly judges, God reminded them that they –

and all of humanity – are children of the Most High. This is true in the sense that every human being is made in the image of God and can be thought of as the *offspring* of God (Act 17:28-29).

i. When these unjust judges denied protection and justice to the poor, fatherless, afflicted, and needy, the judges treated them as less than fully humans made in the image of God who should be regarded as God's creation, His offspring. The judges needed to remember this.

ii. There is another sense in which it *cannot* be said that all people are **children** of God. Some are children of God and others are children of their father the devil (Joh 8:44).

c. **You shall die like men:** The unjust judges of Israel needed to remember that others were greater than the judges thought, and they themselves were *less* than they thought. They were like **gods** only in a symbolic sense; they themselves would **die like men** and face judgment before the Judge of all the earth.

i. "**Like men;** or, *like ordinary men*, as the Hebrew word *adam* sometimes signifies, as it does in Psa 49:12." (Poole)

ii. **You shall die like men:** “Ye shall wax old like others, then ye shall fall sick like others, then ye shall die like others, then ye shall be buried like others, then ye shall be consumed like others, then ye shall be judged like others, even like the beggars which cry at your gates.” (Smith, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **Fall like one of the princes:** “Our Henry VIII was told on his death bed that he should go to the place of princes; which was no great comfort, if the old proverb be true, that hell is paved with the crowns of princes and helmets of soldiers.” (Trapp)

2. (8) *A prayer for God to exercise His perfect judgment.*

**Arise, O God, judge the earth;
For You shall inherit all nations.**

a. **Arise, O God, judge the earth:** Asaph closed the psalm with a plea to God to take *His* place as the ultimate Judge. The unjust judges of Israel had their own area of authority, but God’s authority is over all **the earth**.

i. This prayer called upon God to do what the earthly judges would not do: properly **judge the earth**. Human judges had failed, so Asaph asked God to take judgment into His own hands.

b. **You shall inherit all nations:** This inheritance shows the greatness of God as judge. Earthly judges have their own greatness, but it is nothing compared to the Great Judge. This inheritance ultimately belongs to Jesus Messiah.

i. **For You shall inherit all nations:** “Does not this last verse contain a prophecy of our Lord, the calling of the Gentiles, and the prevalence of Christianity over the earth? Thus several of the *fathers* have understood the passage. It is only by the universal

spread of Christianity over the world, that the reign of righteousness and justice is to be established: and of whom can it be said that *he shall inherit all nations*, but of *Jesus Christ*?" (Clarke)

ii. "The last days shall see him enthroned, and all unrighteous potentates broken like potter's vessels by his potent sceptre. The second advent is still earth's brightest hope. Come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Spurgeon)

iii. "It is great encouragement in missionary work to know that every nation is by right of gift and inheritance our Lord's. He sold His all to purchase it.... It is ours to make it His in fact." (Meyer)

O God, Do Not Keep Silence

Psa 83:1 O God, do not keep silent; do not be still, do not be quiet!

Psa 83:2 Look! Your enemies are in revolt, and those who hate you are rebelling.

Psa 83:3 They are making secret plans against your people; they are plotting against those you protect.

Psa 83:4 "Come," they say, "let us destroy their nation, so that Israel will be forgotten forever."

Psa 83:5 They agree on their plan and form an alliance against you:

Psa 83:6 the people of Edom and the Ishmaelites; the people of Moab and the Hagrites;

Psa 83:7 the people of Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, and of Philistia and Tyre.

Psa 83:8 Assyria has also joined them as a strong ally of the Ammonites and Moabites, the descendants of Lot.

Psa 83:9 Do to them what you did to the Midianites, and to Sisera and Jabin at the Kishon River.

Psa 83:10 You defeated them at Endor, and their bodies rotted on the ground.

Psa 83:11 Do to their leaders what you did to Oreb and Zeeb; defeat all their rulers as you did Zebah and Zalmunna,

Psa 83:12 who said, "We will take for our own the land that belongs to God."

Psa 83:13 Scatter them like dust, O God, like straw blown away by the wind.

Psa 83:14 As fire burns the forest, as flames set the hills on fire,

Psa 83:15 chase them away with your storm and terrify them with your fierce winds.

Psa 83:16 Cover their faces with shame, O LORD, and make them acknowledge your power.

Psa 83:17 May they be defeated and terrified forever; may they die in complete disgrace.

Psa 83:18 May they know that you alone are the LORD, supreme ruler over all the earth.

Psalms 83:1-18

Psalms 83 – A Prayer for Help When War Threatens

*This psalm is titled **A Psalm of Asaph**. The author **Asaph** was probably the great singer and musician of David and Solomon's era (1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:5-7; 1Ch 25:6). 1Ch 25:1 and 2Ch 29:30 add that Asaph was a prophet in his musical compositions.*

Some commentators connect this psalm with 2Ch 20:1-37 and the victory won in Jehoshaphat's time. Others see the collection of 10 enemies set against Israel as not referring to one specific occasion, but to the constant danger of extermination Israel lived under – relevant in both the ancient and modern world.

A. The appeal for help.

1. (1-4) Asking God to take action against those set on destroying Israel.

Do not keep silent, O God!

Do not hold Your peace,

And do not be still, O God!

For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;

And those who hate You have lifted up their head.

They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,

**And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from
being a nation,
That the name of Israel may be remembered no
more."**

a. **Do not keep silent, O God:** Asaph sang this prayer in a time of national crisis. Enemies had come against Israel who were set on their national destruction. If God were to **keep silent** or hold His **peace** or **be still** on behalf of Israel, they would be destroyed.

i. **Do not keep silent:** "It is so difficult sometimes to go on living day by day without one authoritative word; and we are prone to rebuke Him for silence, that He is still, that He holds His peace.... But God has not kept silence. The Word was manifested. In Him the silence of eternity was broken." (Meyer)

b. **Your enemies make a tumult:** Asaph asked God to **behold** this crisis and to regard the enemies of Israel as His own **enemies**, as those who hated Him. Asaph was confident that if God did this, He would act on behalf of Israel.

i. "They are not only enemies to us thy people, but also to thy will, and name, and glory." (Poole)

c. **Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation:** This was the **crafty counsel** of the nations united against Israel. This desire of a confederation of nations to destroy Israel did not end in the days of Asaph. His prayer could be sung today as neighboring nations and the whole world community threaten Israel.

i. Adam Clarke paraphrased the words of verse 4: "Let us exterminate the whole race, that there may not be a record of them on the face of the earth." (Clarke)

ii. "In all the annals of recorded history there has never been a people so encircled by foes or as persecuted as the Jews have been. Yet surprisingly, the Jews have prospered. In 1836 a world census indicated that there were then three million Jews living in many countries. A century later, in 1936, in spite of severe persecutions in which many Jews were killed, particularly in Russia, a second census indicated that the Jewish world population had risen to sixteen million, an increase of thirteen million in a century. The Nazis killed more than six million Jews, but today there are more Jews in the world than before the Nazi era. The only explanation for this growth is that the hand of God has been on this people and that he has blessed them." (Boice)

iii. Israel has had its battles, ancient and modern. Christianity has also been opposed, and some have sought to completely **cut** Christians **off**.

One example was the Roman Emperor Diocletian (A.D. 284-305). Diocletian boasted that he had destroyed Christianity. He liked to think that he had defeated Christianity. He ordered a medal to be made with this inscription: "The name of Christianity being extinguished." Diocletian also set up at least two monuments on the frontier of the empire with these inscriptions:

Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Caesares Augusti for having extended the Roman Empire in the east and the west and for having extinguished the name of Christians who brought the Republic to ruin

Diocletian Jovian Maximian Herculeus Caesares Augusti for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ for having extended the worship of the gods

iv. Diocletian is dead and gone, comparatively a footnote on the pages of history. The fame and glory of Jesus Christ is spread over all the earth. God still takes care of His **sheltered ones**.

v. **Sheltered ones**: "The ten heathen nations conspired against Israel, but they could not really harm the chosen people, for God himself had hidden them as a hen hides her chickens under her wings when the kite hovers overhead, or as one who has found a treasure hides it away from the hands of the thief." (Spurgeon)

2. (5-8) *The confederation of nations against Israel.*

**For they have consulted together with one consent;
They form a confederacy against You:
The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;
Moab and the Hagrites;
Geba, Ammon, and Amalek;
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
Assyria also has joined with them;
They have helped the children of Lot. Selah**

a. **They form a confederacy against You**: Asaph again emphasized that these enemies were not only against Israel, but against Yahweh, Israel's God.

i. **They form a confederacy**: Enemies often come together to attack God and His people. *That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other* (Luk 23:12).

ii. **Against You**: "The true antagonists are, not Israel and the world, but God and the world." (Maclaren)

iii. "What a motley group they were; a league against Israel is always attractive, and gathers whole nations within its bonds." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Let them come from east and west, south and north, and close round Israel; God alone is mightier than they." (Maclaren)

b. **The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites:** The psalmist listed ten nations or peoples that were part of this **confederacy against** Israel and her God. It seems **the children of Lot** (specifically, **Moab** and **Ammon**) led this attack and the other eight nations **helped** them.

i. "The Hagarites (v. 6) were a tribe against whom the Transjordanian tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh fought at the time of the Jewish conquest of Palestine." (Boice)

ii. "*Gebal* is probably not the northern city of that name (better known as Byblos, and associated with Tyre: Jos 13:5; 1Ki 5:18) but a locality south of the Dead Sea." (Kidner)

iii. "The psalmist mentions ten different nations which had banded themselves together against God's chosen people Israel. Ten against one is long odds but then God was on the side of Israel." (Spurgeon)

iv. **Selah:** "There was good reason for a pause when the nation was in such jeopardy and yet it needs faith to make a pause, for unbelief is always in a hurry." (Spurgeon)

B. The cry for vengeance.

1. (9-12) Grant victory and deliverance as in the days of the Judges.

**Deal with them as *with* Midian,
As *with* Sisera,
As *with* Jabin at the Brook Kishon,
Who perished at En Dor,
Who became as refuse on the earth.
Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb,**

**Yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
Who said, "Let us take for ourselves
The pastures of God for a possession."**

a. **Deal with them as with Midian:** God's victory over **Midian** through Gideon is described in Judges 6, 7, , 8.

i. "Faith delights to light upon precedents, and quote them before the Lord; in the present instance, Asaph found a very appropriate one, for the nations in both cases were very much the same, and the plight of the Israelites very similar." (Spurgeon)

b. **As with Sisera:** God's victory over the Canaanite king **Jabin** and his general **Sisera**, through Deborah and Barak, is described in Judges 4.

i. **Who perished at En Dor:** "This refers to the defeat of the *Midianites* by *Gideon*, who were encamped in the valley of *Jezreel*, at the foot of Mount *Gilboa*, and near to *Tabor*, Jdg 6:33; Jdg 7:1, and consequently in the environs of *En-dor*. There *Gideon* attacked and defeated them; and, in various places during their flight, they were destroyed." (Clarke)

ii. **Who became as refuse on the earth:** John Trapp noted that this means "they lay unburied, rotted above ground." This added to the defeat and disgrace of Israel's enemies.

c. **Make their nobles like Oreb: Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah** and **Zalmunna** were all princes of the Midianites, defeated by Gideon in Judges 7.

i. **Make their nobles:** "Smite the great ones as well as the common ruck. Suffer not the ringleaders to escape. As Oreb fell at the rock and Zeeb at the winepress, so do thou mete out vengeance to Zion's

foes wherever thou mayest overtake them.”
(Spurgeon)

ii. “Oreb signifieth a crow, Zeeb a wolf, Zebah a cut-throat, Zalmunna a forbiddener of shadow, or quiet, to his subjects; fit names for tyrants and persecutors of God’s people.” (Trapp)

d. **Let us take for ourselves the pastures of God for a possession:** Israel faced threats to her existence in the days of the Judges, and God delivered her. Asaph’s prayer reminded Israel of God’s previous rescue of Israel, using it as a reason to trust Him in the present crisis.

i. The phrase, **the pastures of God** reminds us again of what high regard God has for the land of Israel. He regards it as *His pastures*. “So the enemy’s thoughts are re-phrased in the prayer, to bring out the truth about the territories they had coveted: these were *the pastures of God*, not simply the holdings of Israel.” (Kidner)

ii. “The Midianites had despoiled the land of the crops and had caused great fear among the Israelites. This spoiling of Israel’s crops is probably referred to in the bold claim ‘Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God’.” (VanGemeren)

2. (13-15) *Bring them to destruction.*

**O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
Like the chaff before the wind!
As the fire burns the woods,
And as the flame sets the mountains on fire,
So pursue them with Your tempest,
And frighten them with Your storm.**

a. **Like the chaff before the wind:** Asaph prayed that God would take these many enemies, determined to

destroy Israel, and scatter them like **chaff before the wind** and the **whirling dust**. He prayed they would be consumed

like fire burns the woods.

i. **Like the whirling dust:** "The word rendered 'whirling dust' in Psa 83:13 is somewhat doubtful. It literally means a rolling thing, but what particular thing of the sort is difficult to determine." (Maclaren)

ii. "'Tumbleweed' (*galgal* lit., 'wheel') is a plant of the wild artichoke family (*Gundelia Tournefortii*), a plant with wheel-shaped stems and thistles." (VanGemeren)

b. **Pursue them with Your tempest:** To the ancient Hebrew, there was nothing more powerful than the **tempest** or the **storm**. The psalmist prayed that God would not only defeat Israel's enemies, but also **pursue** and **frighten them** with His great power.

3. (16-18) Bring these enemies to the knowledge of the true God.

**Fill their faces with shame,
That they may seek Your name, O LORD.
Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;
Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,
That they may know that You, whose name alone is
the LORD,
Are the Most High over all the earth.**

a. **Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name:** Asaph ended this psalm with an unexpected turn. After praying for the destruction of Israel's enemies, he prayed that they would be thoroughly humbled (**fill their faces with shame**) so they would be led to **seek** Yahweh.

i. Asaph understood what we often forget: people will often only seek the LORD if they are first laid low before His power. There is a sense in which God must defeat us before He will save us.

ii. "But there is a deeper desire in the psalmist's heart than the enemies' destruction. He wishes that they should be turned into God's friends and he wishes for their chastisement as the means to that end." (Maclaren)

iii. "Shame has often weaned men from their idols, and set them upon seeking the Lord." (Spurgeon)

iv. "The punishments inflicted by heaven upon wicked men are primarily intended to humble and convert them." (Horne)

b. That they may know that You...are the Most High: This great humbling (**let them be put to shame and perish**) would lead to their surrender and submission to the God who is **Most High over all the earth.**

i. This psalm began with a plea that God would not remain silent, and ends with the idea of His fame and glory going out to all the earth. "When the silences of God are broken by His noises, men learn that the God of Grace is the Most High over all the earth." (Morgan)

My Soul Longs for the Courts of the Lord

Psa 84:1 How I love your Temple, LORD Almighty!

Psa 84:2 How I want to be there! I long to be in the LORD's Temple. With my whole being I sing for joy to the living God.

Psa 84:3 Even the sparrows have built a nest, and the swallows have their own home; they keep their young near your altars, LORD Almighty, my king and my God.

Psa 84:4 How happy are those who live in your Temple, always singing praise to you.

Psa 84:5 How happy are those whose strength comes from you, who are eager to make the pilgrimage to Mount Zion.

Psa 84:6 As they pass through the dry valley of Baca, it becomes a place of springs; the autumn rain fills it with pools.

Psa 84:7 They grow stronger as they go; they will see the God of gods on Zion.

Psa 84:8 Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty. Listen, O God of Jacob!

Psa 84:9 Bless our king, O God, the king you have chosen.

Psa 84:10 One day spent in your Temple is better than a thousand anywhere else; I would rather stand at the gate of the house of my God than live in the homes of the wicked.

Psa 84:11 The LORD is our protector and glorious king, blessing us with kindness and honor. He does not refuse any good thing to those who do what is right.

Psa 84:12 LORD Almighty, how happy are those who trust in you!

Psalms 84:1-12

Psalms 84 – The Pilgrim’s Love and Longing for God and His House

*The title of this psalm is **To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.** These **sons of Korah** were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David’s time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).*

Korah led a rebellion of 250 community leaders against Moses during the wilderness days of the Exodus (Numbers 16). God judged Korah and his leaders and they all died, but the sons of Korah remained (Num 26:9-11). Perhaps they

were so grateful for this mercy that they became notable in Israel for praising God.

Charles Spurgeon said Psalms 84 was entitled "to be called The Pearl of Psalms. If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred-and-third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experiential, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of Peace."

A. Longing for the House of God.

1. (1-2) Longing for God and His house.

**How lovely is Your tabernacle,
O LORD of hosts!**

My soul longs, yes, even faints

For the courts of the LORD;

My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

a. **How lovely is Your tabernacle:** One or more of the *sons of Korah* composed this psalm in the days of the **tabernacle**. It is also possible that the author referred to the temple in a historic, quaint way. The affection is clear; he *loved* the house of God, whether it was in a tent or a permanent building. He considered it beautiful, **lovely**.

i. "*How lovely* is more exactly 'How dear' or 'How beloved'; it is the language of love poetry." (Kidner)

ii. "He does not tell us how lovely they were, because he could not. His expressions show us that his feelings were inexpressible." (Spurgeon)

b. **My soul longs:** The psalmist's appreciation for God's house wasn't simply because it was beautiful. His **soul** longed for God's house, and **even faints** when denied the privilege of meeting with God among His people.

i. This was deep feeling. Not every love is so great as to make a longing. Not every longing is so great as to make a fainting.

ii. "I have rather – though the expression may seem harsh to some – called this the 'appetite for God' than 'the love of God'.... [The appetite for God] has all the cheerful spontaneity of a natural, even a physical, desire." (Lewis, cited in VanGemeran)

c. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God:

The house of God was dear and desired by the psalmist because it was where he met God. Everything within him – **heart** and **flesh** – longed for God and His house.

i. **Cry out:** "The word in question indicates a loud cry, not necessarily a joyful one (cf. Psa 17:1; Lam 2:19)." (Kidner)

ii. "Crieth aloud, as a child when hungry crieth every whit of him, hands feet, face, all cry; and then the mother flings by all, then she flies and outruns herself; so here." (Trapp)

iii. This speaks to those who are leaders in God's house today. More than offering programs, social connections, entertainment, excitement, or self-improvement, they must make places and meetings in which people meet **the living God**.

iv. This speaks to all who come to the house of God today. They must come without primary focus upon programs, social connections, entertainment, excitement, or self-improvement; they must come with the primary focus and expectation of meeting with **the living God**.

v. The emphasis on meeting **the living God** prevents regarding the tabernacle or temple in the wrong way. The temple as a place could be viewed incorrectly (as

in Act 7:48; Act 7:54). The psalmist considers it here in its best sense: the place to meet with **the living God**.

vi. "There was no superstition in this love. He loved the house of God because he loved the God of the house. His heart and flesh cried out, not for the altar and the candlestick, but for his God." (Spurgeon)

vii. **The living God**: "That Name is more than a contrast with the gods of the heathen. It lays bare the reason for the psalmist's longings." (Maclaren)

2. (3-4) Satisfaction in the house of God.

**Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young—
Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in Your house;
They will still be praising You. Selah**

a. **Even the sparrow has found a home**: Perhaps the psalmist saw birds – the **sparrow** and the **swallow** – that had made a **nest**, living at the house of God, in view of the altar itself. He considered those birds blessed, living at the tabernacle.

i. "The writer of this Psalm had peculiar familiarity with the Temple. He had watched it with loving eyes, and seen the birds finding rest and refuge there." (Morgan)

ii. Boice offered that the sparrow is an example of a bird of small significance and the swallow is a picture of restlessness. Likewise, the insignificant can find his place in the house of God, and the restless man can find his rest (**nest**) there – near God's altar.

iii. "It is evidently the design of this passage to intimate to us, that in the house, and at the altar of God, a faithful soul findeth freedom from care and sorrow, quiet of mind, and gladness of spirit; like a bird that had secured a little mansion for the reception and education of her young." (Horne)

iv. "You and I, dear friends, will be wise if we do as this sparrow did; for she found a house for herself because she looked for it, she found it because it was there all ready for her, and she found it by appropriating it so that it became her very own. Thus may we appropriate the Lord Jesus Christ, by an act of faith, and so make him our very own!" (Spurgeon)

v. **My King and my God:** "The double 'my' is very precious; he lays hold upon his God with both his hands, as one resolved not to let him go till the favour requested be at length accorded." (Spurgeon)

b. **Blessed are those who dwell in Your house:** The psalmist went from envying the birds living at the tabernacle to envying the priests who had rooms at the **house** of God. He felt they could live a life of constant praise (**they will still be praising You**).

i. **Still be praising:** "It is not enough to praise him, it must be a praising *him still*, before it will make a blessedness; and though to praise God be an easy matter, yet *to praise him still*, will be found a busy work." (Baker, cited in Spurgeon)

B. Finding strength for the pilgrim's journey.

1. (5-7) *Strength for the one away from the house of God.*

**Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.**

**As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;**

**The rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.**

a. **Blessed is the man whose strength is in You:** The man who finds his **strength** in God is also the one **whose heart is set on pilgrimage**. He does not rely on self or the world for strength, but considers himself a visitor, a traveler, a pilgrim in this world. His true strength and treasure are in the world to come.

i. This strength and heart of a pilgrim are displayed by the love for the house of God. There he meets with God, along with other pilgrims, and they gain strength in God together as they meet.

ii. The love and longing for the house of God are not meant as an escape from the world, but as a preparation for life *in* the world.

iii. **Strength is in You:** "If he cannot be at Zion, he can be with God; if he cannot enjoy sweetness he can find strength." (Kidner)

b. **As they pass through the Valley of Baca:** The heart for God's house provided wisdom and strength for the life lived away from God's house. A difficult place (such as **the Valley of Baca**) was transformed into a **spring**, complete with **rain** and **pools** of water.

i. The sense or meaning of **the Valley of Baca** is uncertain. Commentators usually suggest that **Baca** speaks of tears and weeping, or of drought and dryness. Thoughts of difficulty and trouble are present in either.

ii. **Baca** is a "noun derived from a verb which signifies to 'weep'." (Horne) Horne went on to explain, "This present world is to us this valley of weeping; in our passage through it we are refreshed by the streams

of divine grace, flowing down from the great fountain of consolation."

iii. Kidner gives the other sense: "*Baca*...is thought to indicate a tree or shrub which grows in arid places; hence New English Bible, 'the thirsty valley'."

iv. "*The valley of tears*, as this valley might be called, for the trouble or vexation which travellers found there by reason of drought, or otherwise." (Poole)

c. **They go from strength to strength:** With the blessedness expressed by plenty of water in an otherwise dry place, the pilgrim lives in **strength** and goes to more **strength**. The rich relationship with God is a never-ending supply of strength for the journey, even in difficult seasons.

i. On a normal journey (especially a difficult one), the usual pattern is to go from strength to weakness or fatigue. Not so with those whose strength is in God – **they go from strength to strength**.

ii. "The farther they travel onward in that way, instead of being faint and weary, as travellers in such cases [should] be, they grow stronger and stronger." (Poole)

iii. "They proceed from one degree of grace to another, gaining Divine virtue through all the steps of their probation." (Clarke)

d. **Each one appears before God in Zion:** The journey has a destination – **Zion**, the city of God. The love and longing for the house of God will bring **each one** to his destination, appearing **before God in Zion**.

i. "Not merely to be in the assembly, but to appear before God was the object of each devout Israelite. Would to God it were the sincere desire of all who in these days mingle in our religious gatherings. Unless

we realise the presence of God we have done nothing; the mere gathering together is nothing worth.” (Spurgeon)

2. (8) *The pilgrim’s prayer.*

**O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah**

a. **God of hosts, hear my prayer:** This song from the sons of Korah was more than a declaration; it was also a **prayer**. It was a plea for the plenty spoken of by the supply of water. It was a supplication for the strength that continues and builds.

b. **Give ear, O God of Jacob:** The psalmist **grounded** his plea in the long history of God’s dealing with His covenant people. That same God who blessed and was faithful to **Jacob** will also be faithful to His people today. This is worthy of meditation – thus the insertion of the psalm’s second **Selah**.

C. The surpassing greatness of God and His house.

1. (9) *Asking for God’s attention.*

**O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.**

a. **O God, behold our shield:** We take **shield** here as a reference to a literal **shield**, which was the main means of defense for Israel. The psalmist asked God to **behold** what Israel wisely did to defend itself.

b. **Look upon the face of Your anointed:** We take **Your anointed** as a reference to the King of Israel, who was specially anointed for his office. Though the psalmist had first in mind David (or possibly Solomon), it also points toward the *Messiah*, the ultimate **anointed** One.

2. (10-12) *The greatness of God and His house.*

**For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my
God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.
O LORD of hosts,
Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!**

a. A day in Your courts is better than a thousand:

The psalmist began with love and longing for the house of God, and now he returns to the thought. Time spent at God's house was better and more valuable than time spent elsewhere.

i. "A declaration comparable to Paul's 'all things but loss' (Php 3:8, King James Version), or to Asaph's 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' (Psa 73:25)."
(Kidner)

b. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God: This was another expression of the psalmist's love and longing regarding **the house of God**. Living a luxurious life in the fancy **tents of wickedness** meant nothing to him; he would rather humbly serve in God's house.

i. "We sometimes read this as though there were something heroic about the choice, some touch of sacrifice in the decision. There is nothing of the kind. The singer was a man of profoundest commonsense."
(Morgan)

ii. "To bear burdens and open doors for the Lord is more honour than to reign among the wicked. Every man has his choice, and this is ours. God's worst is better than the devil's best." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Doorkeeper:** "As the Korahites were, to whom this psalm was committed; and for whose encouragement this might be spoken. A doorkeeper is first in, last out." (Trapp)

iv. "There may be a reference to the Korahites' function of door keepers, in that touchingly beautiful choice of the psalmist's, rather to lie on the threshold of the Temple than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Maclaren)

v. "Who *now* prefers the worship of God to genteel, gay, honourable, and noble company, to mirthful feasts, public entertainments, the stage, the oratorio, or the ball! Reader, wouldst thou rather be in thy *closet*, wrestling in prayer, or reading the Scriptures on thy knees, than be at any of the above places?" (Clarke)

c. **For the LORD God is a sun and shield:** The psalmist explains the goodness and blessing that come to those pilgrims who love and long for the house of God. They enjoy God as the source of blessing (**sun**) and defense (**shield**). They receive His generous **grace and glory**.

i. "This is the only place in the Bible where God is explicitly called 'a sun.' It is because he shines on us and is the brightness of our days." (Boice)

ii. "A sun for happy days and a shield for dangerous ones. A sun above, a shield around. A light to show the way and a shield to ward off its perils." (Spurgeon)

iii. "How God suits Himself to our need! In darkness, He is a Sun; in the sultry noon, a Shield; in our earthly pilgrimage He gives grace; when the morning of heaven breaks, He will give glory. He suits Himself

to every varying circumstance in life. He becomes what the exigency of the moment requires." (Meyer)

d. **The LORD will give grace and glory:** The connection between God's grace and His glory was later on the mind of the Apostle Paul: *We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God* (Rom 5:1-2).

i. To say, **will give grace** puts it in the future tense. It means that there is more grace for God to give and more grace for us to receive. It also means that grace is something that God will **give**, and not sell.

ii. Grace is God's first gift, and glory is His last gift. "Glory never comes without grace coming first, but grace never comes without glory coming last; the two are bound together, and 'what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'" (Spurgeon)

e. **No good thing will He withhold:** A promise is made to **those who walk uprightly** – they will receive every good thing God has for them. The nature of this promise is appropriate under the Old Covenant, where God promised direct blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Under the New Covenant, the believer receives God's good things on the basis of Jesus' goodness, and *then* goes on to **walk uprightly**.

i. "What does the text say? It does not say, 'I will force all my children to enjoy every good thing.' No, but, 'No good thing will he withhold.' There are thousands of mercies that we do not enjoy, not because they are withheld, but because we do not take them." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Because God is what He is, and gives what He gives, it is the highest wisdom to take Him for our true good, and never to let Him go." (Maclaren)

f. **Blessed is the man who trusts in You:** God's greatness and goodness lead the psalmist to experience and declare the blessedness of trusting in God.

i. "The essence of godliness is in submissiveness to the Great King, who will grant his blessings to those who find their refuge in him." (VanGemeren)

Revive Us Again

Psa 85:1 LORD, you have been merciful to your land; you have made Israel prosperous again.

Psa 85:2 You have forgiven your people's sins and pardoned all their wrongs.

Psa 85:3 You stopped being angry with them and held back your furious rage.

Psa 85:4 Bring us back, O God our savior, and stop being displeased with us!

Psa 85:5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will your anger never cease?

Psa 85:6 Make us strong again, and we, your people, will praise you.

Psa 85:7 Show us your constant love, O LORD, and give us your saving help.

Psa 85:8 I am listening to what the LORD God is saying; he promises peace to us, his own people, if we do not go back to our foolish ways.

Psa 85:9 Surely he is ready to save those who honor him, and his saving presence will remain in our land.

Psa 85:10 Love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will embrace.

Psa 85:11 Human loyalty will reach up from the earth, and God's righteousness will look down from heaven.

Psa 85:12 The LORD will make us prosperous, and our land will produce rich harvests.

Psa 85:13 Righteousness will go before the LORD and prepare the path for him.

Psalms 85:1-13

Psalms 85 – Praying for Revival and Restoration

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah**. These **sons of Korah** were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).*

Like several psalms, Psalms 85 (in some ways) seems to fit the period of Israel's return from exile; in other ways it does not. Alexander Maclaren noted, "The book of Nehemiah supplies precisely such a background as fits the psalm. A part of the nation had returned indeed, but to a ruined city, a fallen Temple, and a mourning land, where they were surrounded by jealous and powerful enemies." Even if this psalm belongs to an earlier period (such as the end of Saul's reign), God's people find themselves in this place from time to time, and this beautiful psalm is appropriate.

A. Gratitude for favor and restoration.

1. (1-2) Brought back from captivity and sin.

**LORD, You have been favorable to Your land;
You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.
You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people;
You have covered all their sin. Selah**

a. **You have been favorable to Your land:** The psalmist finds relief in God's care for His land. Notably, the territory of Israel is called **Your land**. The Bible understands that all the earth belongs to the Lord

(Psa 24:1), and yet there is an undeniable way in which Israel is His special possession, with God having a special regard for His **land**.

b. You have brought back the captivity of Jacob:

Many think this phrase means this psalm was written after the Babylonian captivity. This is possible, and some psalms clearly date to this period (such as Psalms 79). Yet the idea of Israel being in some kind of **captivity** also suits some other periods, such as the period of Philistine domination in the later years of Saul's reign (1 Samuel 28-31).

i. "Israel is not pining for past glories, which are often an optical illusion...but remembering past mercies. This is realistic; it is also stimulating: it leads to prayers rather than dreams." (Kidner)

c. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people:

The psalmist was not only interested in the land, but more importantly in *relationship* with God. The **iniquity** that once hindered relationship was now taken away. The idea was so important and precious to the psalmist that he repeated it in different words according to the style of Hebrew poetry.

i. **Forgiven, covered:** "He uses two significant words for pardon, both of which occur in Psa 32:1-11. In Psa 85:2 a, sin is regarded as a weight pressing down the nation, which God's mercy lifts off and takes away; in Psa 85:2 b, it is conceived of as a hideous stain or foulness, which His mercy hides, so that it is no longer an offence to heaven." (Maclaren)

ii. **Forgiven their iniquity:** "*Thou hast borne, or carried away, the iniquity.* An allusion to the ceremony of the *scapegoat*." (Clarke)

iii. **All their sin:** "All of it, every spot, and wrinkle, the veil of love has covered all. Sin has been divinely put out of sight." (Spurgeon)

2. (3) *Rescued from God's righteous anger.*

**You have taken away all Your wrath;
You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.**

a. **You have taken away all Your wrath:** The psalmist found peace in the satisfaction of God's **wrath**. Once they were the righteous subjects of God's judgment, and now they were delivered from it. There is special beauty in the words **all Your wrath**, speaking of a complete work.

i. As with the previous verse (*covered all their sin*), this looks forward to the complete work of Jesus on the cross, where He satisfied God's righteous requirement to the full with a *once-for-all* sacrifice (Heb 7:27; Heb 9:12; Heb 10:10).

ii. "Some of the strongest salvation language in Scripture is present in these verses. 'Covered their sins' describes what is meant by *atonement*. 'Set aside your wrath' is what is meant by the word *propitiation*." (Boice)

b. **You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger:** There is great relief in knowing God's **anger** has passed. This is especially true when considering the **fierceness** of His anger.

B. Prayer for continued favor and restoration.

1. (4-5) *A prayer for restoration.*

**Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.
Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?**

a. **Restore us, O God of our salvation:** The psalmist began by thanking God for return and restoration. In light of that past goodness, the psalmist now prays for continued and present restoration.

b. **Will You be angry with us forever?** Verse 3 thanked God for the turning of His fierce anger. That work in the past was the basis of this prayer, "Lord do it again."

2. (6-7) *A prayer for revival.*

**Will You not revive us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?
Show us Your mercy, LORD,
And grant us Your salvation.**

a. **Will You not revive us again:** This is a simple and wonderful prayer for revival. It recognizes that revival is not man-made, but given by God. Yet it also recognizes that one may and should *pray* for revival, and pray with godly expectation.

i. This prayer for revival "...implies that the people were alive once, have died in a spiritual sense, and now need to be given spiritual life again. This is what the church almost always needs, and it is how revivals come." (Boice)

ii. The context tells us *when* to pray for revival.

- We should pray for revival when we remember the great things God has done in the past (as in verses 1-3).

- We should pray for revival when we sense we are under a cloud of divine displeasure or an evident lack of blessing (as in verses 4-5).

iii. The context tells us *who* to pray for.

- In praying for revival, pray for the pastor. Ask God to personally revive him, to strengthen him against temptation and discouragement, and to fill him with faith. Ask God to bless the pastor's work with great spiritual power. James McGrady is an example of a man who made the most of getting his congregation to pray for him. He was the man so ugly that he attracted attention. McGrady came over the Allegheny Mountains to minister on the frontier of Kentucky. He had three little box-like Presbyterian churches. McGrady described the work during the winter of 1799 as "...for the most part weeping and mourning with the people of God." He promoted a once-a-month *concert* of prayer with other churches, but he asked his people to pray for him when the sun set on Saturday for half an hour and when the sun rose on Sunday for half an hour. McGrady was no specimen as a preacher – he had a bad voice and people noticed his awkward gestures in preaching. But in 1800 there came a flood of blessing, with meetings as large as 25,000 people.

- In praying for revival, pray for the congregation. Pray for a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the *congregation*, not only on the preacher.

- In praying for revival, pray for other churches in your community.

- In praying for revival, pray for the community in general, that Jesus would answer the promise of Joh 16:7-8, sending the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin.

b. That Your people may rejoice in You: Praying for revival means praying that God's work among His people would cause them to find their joy in nothing else than in Him. So we pray:

- Full of confidence, knowing that God can revive.
- Full of boldness, pleading with God for revival.
- Full of humility, desiring God's glory and praise.

i. "The words before us teach us that gratitude has an eye to the giver, even beyond the gift – 'thy people may rejoice in *thee*.' Those who were revived would rejoice not only in the new life but in the Lord who was the author of it." (Spurgeon)

c. **Show us Your mercy:** Revival is a work of God's **mercy**. It isn't earned or deserved. God graciously grants true revival.

d. **Grant us Your salvation:** True revival demonstrates that **salvation** is God's work. Jonah saw a great work of revival in Nineveh, flowing from his embrace of the great principle: *Salvation is of the LORD* (Jon 2:9).

C. Confidence in God's response.

1. (8-9) *Hearing God's word of peace.*

**I will hear what God the LORD will speak,
For He will speak peace
To His people and to His saints;
But let them not turn back to folly.
Surely His salvation *is* near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.**

a. **I will hear what God the LORD will speak:** In the last section of this psalm, the psalmist expressed surrender and submission to God. The proper attitude of the believer praying for revival is to surrender to the authority of God's word.

i. "'I will be silent. I have spoken to him; now I will hear what his answer is. I will hold my ear attentive to listen to his voice.' O my dear hearers, when you

are willing to hear God, there are good times coming to you!" (Spurgeon)

b. **For He will speak peace:** The psalmist was confident in the goodness of God, and that God would **speak peace** to His humble, surrendered **people and to His saints**.

i. "The gospel is accordingly styled by St. Peter 'the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ.' Act 10:36." (Horne)

ii. "He that will not hear the gospel of peace, shall never know the peace of the gospel. If you will not hear the Holy Spirit when he warns you of your sin, neither shall you hear him revealing peace through pardon." (Spurgeon)

c. **But let them not turn back to folly:** Humility and surrender are proper attitudes for God's people. They should turn to Him in true repentance, and **not turn back to folly**.

d. **His salvation is near to those who fear Him:** The humble and surrendered people of God enjoy the nearness of **His salvation**. As God moves among His people this way, **glory may dwell in our land**.

2. (10-13) *The good righteousness of God.*

**Mercy and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.
Yes, the LORD will give *what is good*;
And our land will yield its increase.
Righteousness will go before Him,
And shall make His footsteps *our pathway*.**

a. **Mercy and truth have met together:** In beautiful terms the psalmist describes the salvation God brings to His people. It might seem that **mercy** and **truth** are set against each other, with **mercy** looking to grant pardon and truth determined to condemn. In God's great work of salvation, **mercy and truth have met together**.

i. **Mercy and truth have met together:** The word here translated **mercy** is the great Hebrew word *hesed*, which often has the idea of *grace* or *loyal love*. This verse may have been the inspiration for what John later wrote: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (Joh 1:14). For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (Joh 1:17).*

b. **Righteousness and peace have kissed:** Even as mercy and truth meet, so **righteousness and peace** greet each other warmly. It might seem that **righteousness** would condemn me and prevent God's *shalom* (**peace**) from ever reaching me. In God's great work of salvation, His **righteousness and peace** are the best of friends.

i. "These four divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ.... Mercy was ever inclined to save man, and Peace could not be his enemy; but Truth exacted the performance of God's threat, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die'; and Righteousness could not but give to every one his due." (Horne)

ii. "Now, *Where* did these meet? In Christ Jesus. *When* were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary." (Clarke)

iii. Paul later expressed this idea in Rom 3:26 : *That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*. At the cross, God demonstrated His righteousness by offering man *justification* (a legal verdict of “not guilty”), while remaining completely *just* (because the righteous penalty of sin had been paid at the cross). God could be only just, and simply send every guilty sinner to hell, as a just judge would do. Only God could find a way to be both *just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*.

c. **Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven:** God pours out His **truth** and **righteousness**. They seem to spring forth from creation itself. Prophetically, we may say this refers not only to the reconciliation started at the cross, but also has in view its completion at the end of the age, when *creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God* (Rom 8:21).

i. “The devil is the great disrupter. He has brought disharmony to the universe. God brings harmony. In these verses four great attributes of God meet together...and then, like conquering generals, they march side by side to a victory that is the sure and certain hope of God’s people.” (Boice)

d. **Righteousness will go before Him:** Righteousness so marks God that it goes before Him, as the tail of a comet goes behind the comet. God’s **righteousness** is so rich that it also makes **His footsteps our pathway** – the pathway of His people.

i. “The psalmist began with a reflection of God’s past acts of salvation and leaves a canonical hope in the progression of redemption, as God’s ‘righteousness’ advances his kingdom.” (VanGemeren)

ii. **His footsteps our pathway:** “God’s march...will leave a track wherein his people will joyfully follow.”
(Spurgeon)

Great Is Your Steadfast Love

Psa 86:1 Listen to me, LORD, and answer me, for I am helpless and weak.

Psa 86:2 Save me from death, because I am loyal to you; save me, for I am your servant and I trust in you.

Psa 86:3 You are my God, so be merciful to me; I pray to you all day long.

Psa 86:4 Make your servant glad, O Lord, because my prayers go up to you.

Psa 86:5 You are good to us and forgiving, full of constant love for all who pray to you.

Psa 86:6 Listen, LORD, to my prayer; hear my cries for help.

Psa 86:7 I call to you in times of trouble, because you answer my prayers.

Psa 86:8 There is no god like you, O Lord, not one has done what you have done.

Psa 86:9 All the nations that you have created will come and bow down to you; they will praise your greatness.

Psa 86:10 You are mighty and do wonderful things; you alone are God.

Psa 86:11 Teach me, LORD, what you want me to do, and I will obey you faithfully; teach me to serve you with complete devotion.

Psa 86:12 I will praise you with all my heart, O Lord my God; I will proclaim your greatness forever.

Psa 86:13 How great is your constant love for me! You have saved me from the grave itself.

Psa 86:14 Proud people are coming against me, O God; a cruel gang is trying to kill me—people who pay no attention

to you.

Psa 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a merciful and loving God, always patient, always kind and faithful.

Psa 86:16 Turn to me and have mercy on me; strengthen me and save me, because I serve you just as my mother did.

Psa 86:17 Show me proof of your goodness, LORD; those who hate me will be ashamed when they see that you have given me comfort and help.

Psalms 86:1-17

Psalms 86 – Help from the Great God

*The title of this psalm is simply **A Prayer of David**. We can't place it at a specific time in David's life, because there are too many possible points where this could connect with his general circumstances. This psalm is notable because David uses the Hebrew word Adonai ("Master") seven times when referring to God.*

"There are four other psalms each called by the name Tephillah, or 'prayer,' but this deserves to be distinguished from the rest and known as 'the prayer of David,' even as the ninetieth Psalm is known as 'the prayer of Moses.' It savours of David. The man of sincerity, of ardor, of trials, of faults, and of great heart, pleads, sobs, and trusts through all the verses of this psalm." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. A plea for help with reasons given.

1. (1) Help me because of my great need.

**Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me;
For I *am* poor and needy.**

a. **Bow down Your ear:** David used expressive language to speak of his need. The idea – figurative, of

course – is that God in heaven bows His head to earth to hear David’s plea for help – David’s cry, “**Hear me.**”

i. “When our prayers are lowly by reason of our humility, or feeble by reason of our sickness, or without wing by reason of our despondency, the Lord will bow down to them, the infinitely exalted Jehovah will have respect unto them.” (Spurgeon)

ii. After the request, David then gave God some reasons *why* his prayer should be answered. David thought carefully in his prayer, and presented both requests and reasons to God. “The psalm is unique in its method of urging a petition upon the ground of some known fact.” (Morgan)

b. **For I am poor and needy:** This was the first of several reasons *why* God should answer the request of the first line. David here appealed to God’s sympathy, to His compassion. A hard-hearted God wouldn’t care for a **poor and needy** man, or worse yet might despise him. Yet David knew that God was full of love and compassion and would be moved by the fact that David was, and knew himself to be, **poor and needy**.

i. It is significant that David *began* his plea with this. His understanding of the love and compassion of God was foundational.

ii. David was not afraid to be humble, as we are sometimes. “To confess that we are poor and needy seems demeaning. To be a servant seems unworthy. We want to be people who deserve something from God because of who we are.” (Boice)

2. (2) *Help me because I am connected to You.*

Preserve my life, for I am holy;

You are my God;

Save Your servant who trusts in You!

a. **Preserve my life:** David's problem was desperate; he felt that without God's help he could perish. Considering the many people set against him (as seen in verse 14), he had reason to be this concerned.

i. Beyond this, we aren't told the nature of David's need. We know it was severe, and he felt it to be life-threatening. Yet we don't know if it was danger from Saul, or the Philistines, or from assassins, or from a dozen other things. *This is good*, because it allows us to see our need in David's need. It allows us to know that we can approach God on the same basis for whatever our need is.

b. **For I am holy:** This wasn't a claim to absolute holiness. David knew he was a sinner; that he had and would sin. Yet he also knew that as a man among other men – and especially next to those who were against him – he was a **holy** man.

c. **You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You:** David based this plea on three similar ideas, all rooted in the fact that he was connected to God.

- **I am holy:** "I am connected to You morally God; I embrace Your holiness in my own life."

- **You are my God:** "I am connected to You with worship and honor."

- **Save Your servant who trusts in You:** "I am connected to You in trust and faith."

i. In all this we see how *intelligent* and *well-thought-out* David's prayer was. When he came to the throne of God, he came with careful thought.

3. (3-4) *Help me because I cry unto You.*

**Be merciful to me, O Lord,
For I cry to You all day long.**

**Rejoice the soul of Your servant,
For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

a. **Be merciful to me...For I cry to You all day long:**

David asked for mercy because he was completely dependent upon God. He cried to God **all day long** because he could not or would not rely on anyone else for help.

i. "Lest any should, by the former words (I am holy), suspect him to be a merit-monger, he beggeth mercy, with instancy and constancy of request." (Trapp)

ii. To take this same figure, many of us would **cry to** God for a period of time and then figure out another way to address our need. Not David; he relied on God and God alone.

iii. **O Lord:** This is the first of seven uses of *Adonai* in this psalm. Many translators use smaller letters to indicate the translation of *Adonai* (Lord), as opposed to all capital letters of some kind to translate *Yahweh* (LORD or LORD). "The name of God which dominates is Adonahy, or Lord, which indicates absolute Lordship, and by the use of which the singer shows his sense of submission and loyalty." (Morgan)

b. **Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You...I**

lift up my soul: The *reason* is much the same as in the previous verse; an expression of reliance and trust in God (**to You...I lift up my soul**). But the *request* is beautifully stated: **Rejoice the soul of Your servant.** David felt that he could only find joy in his soul as God met his need.

4. (5) *Help me because You are a gracious God.*

**For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,
And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon
You.**

a. For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive:

David based this plea on the graciousness of God, knowing that He is **good** and **ready to forgive**. Far too many people who should know better doubt both the goodness of God and His readiness to forgive.

i. "Whereas most men, though they will forgive, yet they are not *ready* to forgive, they are hardly brought to it, though they do it at last. But God is '*ready to forgive*'." (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "We are blinded by sin, and cannot believe that God is ready to forgive. We think that we must induce Him to forgive, by tears, promises of amendment, religious observances.... Oh, clasp this word to your heart! Say it over and over again – '*Ready to forgive, ready to forgive!*'" (Meyer)

iii. Many wait to repent and ask forgiveness because they think that *time* might make God *more* forgiving. That isn't possible. He is ready to forgive *now*.

iv. "You have fallen a hundred times, and are ashamed to come to God again; it seems too much to expect that He will receive you again. But He will, for He is ready to forgive." (Meyer)

b. Abundant in mercy to all those who call upon

You: As David called upon God for help, he expected **abundant mercy** from God. This expectation spoken in faith would be answered.

5. (6-7) The confidence of an answer to this plea for help.

Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;

And attend to the voice of my supplications.

In the day of my trouble I will call upon You,

For You will answer me.

a. **Give ear...attend to the voice of my supplications:** Again, David simply asked for God to

hear him. He was confident that if the loving, merciful God heard his plea, He would answer favorably.

i. David here repeated the idea from verse 1, but the repetition had a purpose. "He repeats and multiplies his requests, both to ease his own troubled mind, and to prevail with God, who is well-pleased with his people's importunity [persistence] in prayer." (Poole)

b. **In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me:** This demonstrates David's wonderful confidence in God. He knew that God was not a fair-weather friend; instead, God could be counted on even in the **day of trouble**.

i. Adam Clarke put the emphasis on **my** and **me** in verses 6-7. "Attend to *me*. Millions call upon thee for help and mercy; but who has more need than myself?"

ii. **You will answer me:** "Our experience confirms us in the belief that Jehovah the living God really does aid those who call upon him, and therefore we pray and mean to pray, not because we are so fascinated by prayer that for its own sake we would continue in it if it proved to be mere folly and superstition, as vain philosophers assert; but because we really, indeed, and of a truth, find it to be a practical and effectual means of obtaining help from God in the hour of need." (Spurgeon)

B. Depending on the great God who helps His people.

1. (8-10) The greatness of God.

**Among the gods *there is* none like You, O Lord;
Nor *are there any* works like Your works.
All nations whom You have made
Shall come and worship before You, O Lord,
And shall glorify Your name.**

**For You *are* great, and do wondrous things;
You alone *are* God.**

a. **Among the gods there is none like You:** David's understanding of who God is in this psalm – listening, holy, worthy of trust, merciful, good, ready to forgive – stands in contrast to the contemporary understanding of many of the pagan gods, such as Baal, Ashtoreth, or Dagon. Many of these gods were understood to be bitter, vengeful, cunning, and sexually depraved. David knew that the LORD God was different.

i. "I am not now calling upon a deaf and impotent idol, for then I might cry my heart out, and all in vain, as they did, 1Ki 18:26-29; but upon the Almighty and most gracious God." (Poole)

b. **Nor are there any works like Your works:** David knew that when *God* did something, it was glorious. It had the imprint of His glorious character upon it, and could not be compared to the works of man.

i. "*Works* probably mean here the things God has made, rather than the deeds He has done (which come later, 10a)." (Kidner)

c. **All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You:** David recognized that God was Creator and master over **all nations**, not merely Israel. In a day when most gods were considered to be only national or regional deities, David knew that his God – the living God, the true God – was different.

d. **For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God:** David understood that the LORD was not one God among many gods, or even the best God among many gods. He

alone is God, and none other.

i. “*Wondrous things*, variously translated in the Psalms, is a frequent term for God’s miracles of salvation.” (Kidner)

ii. It is **do**, not *did* (though *did* would be true also). “Note that the verb *doest* is in the present, the Lord is doing wondrous things, they are transpiring before our eyes.” (Spurgeon)

2. (11-12) *Whole-life dependence on the great God.*

Teach me Your way, O LORD;

I will walk in Your truth;

Unite my heart to fear Your name.

I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,

And I will glorify Your name forevermore.

a. **Teach me Your way, O LORD:** Because David knew who God is – not perfectly, of course, but with great understanding – his natural reaction was to submit himself to this great, gracious God and to ask Him to **teach** him.

i. Again, this shows that David understood that this amazing God *cared for him*. This same majestic God, whom all nations will worship and glorify, will hear the plea from one *poor and needy* man (verse 1) who asks, “**Teach me Your way, O LORD.**”

ii. This verse also shows a subtle shift in the psalm. In the first section (verses 1-7) David desperately cried out for help. In doing so, he thought deeply about who God is and what He does. Those thoughts did not make David retract his plea for help, but it did make him say, “I need to learn from this great God. **Teach me Your way, O LORD.**”

iii. We could even say that David’s great need showed him his need to be taught. It brought him to say, “Don’t give me *my way*, Lord; teach me *Your way*.”

iv. "Most of us, when we pray, are concerned about deliverance and help and guidance and such things. But we are not nearly as concerned to be taught God's way and to be helped to serve him with an undivided heart." (Boice)

b. **I will walk in Your truth:** This determination gave integrity to David's request. He wanted to be taught so that he could live – so that he could **walk** in God's **truth**. This wasn't merely to satisfy intellectual curiosity or to win arguments; it was to live.

i. "*Walking*, in the Scripture, takes in the whole of our conversation or conduct: and to walk *in* anything, intends a fulness of it. For a man to *walk in* pride, is something more than to be proud: it says, that pride is his way, his element; that he is wholly under the influence of it." (Jay, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Unite my heart to fear Your name:** David knew he could only walk in God's truth with a *united heart*. A divided heart – divided among different loyalties and different deities – could never walk in God's truth.

i. "Our minds are apt to be divided between a variety of objects, like trickling streamlets which waste their force in a hundred runnels; our great desire should be to have all our life-floods poured into one channel and to have that channel directed towards the Lord alone." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Unite my heart:** "*Join* all the purposes, resolutions, and affections of my heart *together*, to fear and to glorify thy name. This is a most important prayer. A *divided* heart is a great curse; *scattered* affections are a miserable plague. When the *heart* is not at *unity* with itself, the work of religion cannot go on. *Indecision* of *mind* and *division* of *affections* mar any work. The *heart* must be *one*, that the *work* may

be *one*. If this be wanting, all is wrong. This is a prayer which becomes the mouth of every Christian.” (Clarke)

iii. We could say that the united heart is the goal; the way to the goal is “**teach me Your way, O LORD**” and “**I will walk in Your truth.**” David therefore indicated that this couldn’t happen in his own self-effort. Instead, he asked God to **unite** his **heart** as he was taught and as he walked in the truth. Since Yahweh is God alone (verse 10), David wanted his heart to be toward God alone.

iv. At the same time, the idea of a unified heart is one of the Old Testament promises of the New Covenant, as in Eze 11:19 : *Then I will give them one heart*. As part of this New Covenant, we have reason to pray confidently for God to work a unified heart in us.

d. **Way...truth...unite**: He is our way, our truth, and our life (Joh 14:6). He is our *way*; we say, “**Teach me Your way.**” He is our *truth*; we say, “**I will walk in Your truth.**” He is our *life*; we say, “**Unite my heart to fear Your name.**”

e. **I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart**: This is what David wanted to do with his united heart – he wanted to **praise** God with it. As noted earlier in the psalm, David knew God was worthy of such praise; but he knew he could only praise God as he should with God uniting his heart.

i. David wanted to do this *with* his united heart; but perhaps he also understood that **praise** is one way to **unite** the **heart**. When we consciously focus the attention of our mind, emotions, and affections upon who God is and what He has done for us, our heart is marvelously united.

ii. "Here is a God-given beginning (and practical means) to the answer of his prayer: his *whole heart* absorbed in praise." (Kidner)

iii. "Though nothing can add to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. When we praise God, we spread his fame and renown, we display the trophies of his excellency." (Watson, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. **O Lord my God:** "This is the second time in the Psalm that David calls the Lord 'my God,' the first time he was in an agony of prayer (verse 2), and now he is in an ecstasy of praise." (Spurgeon)

- He is our God in times of trouble – we rely upon Him.

- He is our God in times of rejoicing – we praise Him.

3. (13-15) *Depending on the graciousness of God.*

**For great *is* Your mercy toward me,
And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.**

**O God, the proud have risen against me,
And a mob of violent *men* have sought my life,
And have not set You before them.**

But You, O Lord, *are* a God full of compassion, and gracious,

Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

a. **For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol:**

David thought about God's *past* deliverance in his life. The merciful God who rescued him before would rescue him again.

i. **Great is Your mercy:** "**Mercy**" here is *hesed*, the great word for covenant love, love that is promised in a covenant relationship.

ii. "As for the rescue *from the depths of Sheol*, it is possible to take this as either past or future." (Kidner)

b. **The proud have risen against me, and a mob of violent men have sought my life:** David lived such a long life of danger and adventure that we can't precisely place this event in his life. It could have come at several points. Obviously, the danger was clear and real.

c. **And have not set You before them:** For David it was clear. **Proud** men, **violent** mobs, are not surrendered to God. If these **proud** and **violent** men had set God before them, they would have shared some of His **compassion**, graciousness, **longsuffering**, **mercy**, and **truth**.

d. **You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion:** David knew that the evil of man did not negate the goodness of God. God is **full of compassion**, and **gracious**, **longsuffering** and **abundant in mercy and truth**, despite the pride and violence of men.

i. **But You:** "What a contrast! We get away from the hectorings and blusterings of proud but puny men to the glory and goodness of the Lord." (Spurgeon)

ii. Compare the words of this psalm with the phrasing of Exo 34:6-7, the great revelation of God to Moses: *The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.*

iii. It seems that twice in this psalm David quoted the words and ideas from Moses' encounter with God recorded in Exo 34:6-7. We see this in verse 5: *For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy.* Also, it is seen here in verse 15: **But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion,**

and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

iv. "David seems to have stood in the cleft of the rock with Moses, and to have heard the name of the Lord proclaimed even as the great lawgiver did, for in two places in this Psalm he almost quotes *verbatim* the passage in Exo 34:6." (Spurgeon)

v. We could say that David read his Bible, and learned who God is. Then he took that knowledge to prayer, and asked God to answer his prayer because of who He revealed Himself to be in the Scriptures.

4. (16-17) *A hopeful plea for help.*

**Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me!
Give Your strength to Your servant,
And save the son of Your maidservant.
Show me a sign for good,
That those who hate me may see *it* and be ashamed,
Because You, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.**

a. **Turn to me, and have mercy on me:** Through it all, David never approached God on the basis of what he *deserved*. Anything he received from God, he would receive on the basis of **mercy**.

b. **Give Your strength to Your servant:** This answer to this plea of David is confirmed by the later exhortation of Paul: *Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (Eph 6:10). God does **give** His **strength** to His **servant**!

c. **Save the son of Your maidservant:** We aren't told much in 1 or 2 Samuel about David's mother, but this brief mention suggests that she was a godly woman who served God and who could be called "**Your maidservant**."

i. In a few places (such as Gen 14:14 and Jer 2:14) the Bible gives the idea of a *home-born* slave – someone who is a slave because his mother was a slave, and he was born into servitude. That may be David's idea here; to express how completely he belongs to God, he pleads as **the son of Your maidservant**.

d. **Show me a sign for good**: David seems to say, "Lord, I do not expect the whole answer right now. Yet, **show me a sign for good** – give me some indication of Your help and power – so **that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed**."

i. Here David is wonderful for his *humility* – not demanding all the answer from God right now. He is also wonderful for his *humanity* – asking for **a sign for good** at the moment.

ii. In some cases, it is wrong to ask God, "**Show me a sign for good**." It is wrong when our attitude is, "God, prove to me that You love me" or "I will believe if You

show me a sign, but if You do not, then I will not believe You." Yet there are some proper times when we can cry out to God, "**Show me a sign for good**."

- Answers to prayer are a **sign for good** (verse 1, *Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me*).

- Preservation of character is a **sign for good** (verse 2, *for I am holy*).

- Deliverance from trouble is a **sign for good** (verse 2, *Save Your servant who trusts in You!*).

- Joy in a surrendered life is a **sign for good** (verse 4, *Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul*).

- A sense of forgiveness is a **sign for good** (verse 5, *You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive*).
- Confidence in God is a **sign for good** (verse 7, *For You will answer me*).
- Knowing and declaring the greatness of God is a **sign for good** (verse 10, *For You are great, and do wondrous things*).
- With proud and violent men as enemies, it is a **sign for good** (verse 14, *the proud have risen against me, and a mob of violent men have sought my life*).

iii. Some – such as Adam Clarke – take this expression differently. “*Make with me a sign.*’ Fix the honourable mark of thy name upon me, that I may be known to be thy servant. There seems to be an allusion here to the *marking of a slave*, to ascertain whose property he was.” Perhaps we could say, “Put Your mark of goodness on me, so that all can see that I am Yours and You will deliver me.”

e. **Because You, LORD, have helped me and comforted me:** Once again David bases his current expectation on God’s prior help. Every past experience of God’s goodness to us is a promise of His continued blessing.

Glorious Things of You Are Spoken

Psa 87:1 The LORD built his city on the sacred hill;

Psa 87:2 more than any other place in Israel he loves the city of Jerusalem.

Psa 87:3 Listen, city of God, to the wonderful things he says about you:

Psa 87:4 "I will include Egypt and Babylonia when I list the nations that obey me; the people of Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia I will number among the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

Psa 87:5 Of Zion it will be said that all nations belong there and that the Almighty will make her strong.

Psa 87:6 The LORD will write a list of the peoples and include them all as citizens of Jerusalem.

Psa 87:7 They dance and sing, "In Zion is the source of all our blessings."

Psalms 87:1-7

Psalms 87 – Citizens of Zion

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song.** These **sons of Korah** were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time it seems they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship (2Ch 20:19).*

Charles Spurgeon observed, "This 'Psalm or song' was either composed by the sons of Korah, or dedicated to them: as they kept the doors of the house of the Lord, they could use this beautiful composition as a Psalm within the doors, and as a song outside."

A. The greatness of Jerusalem.

1. (1-2) Zion beloved by God.

His foundation is in the holy mountains.

The LORD loves the gates of Zion

More than all the dwellings of Jacob.

a. **His foundation is in the holy mountains:** Yahweh is not a local deity; the whole earth belongs to the LORD (Exo 9:29, Psa 24:1). Yet He has a special regard for Jerusalem, which is described as **in the holy mountains**.

i. "The city owes all its stability and sanctity to him: the first word of the psalm is literally 'His establishment' – an abrupt and emphatic opening – and its hills are (lit.) 'hills of holiness' because he is

there; it is not the other way round. He is there simply because he *loves* the place.” (Kidner)

ii. “The psalmist’s fervent love for Jerusalem is something more than national pride. It is the apotheosis [elevation] of that emotion, clarified and hallowed into religion. Zion is founded by God Himself. The mountains on which it stands are made holy by the Divine dwelling.” (Maclaren)

b. **His foundation:** God’s **foundation** is in Jerusalem, the center of His redemptive work. Since God’s work happens in time and space, it had to happen somewhere, and God chose Jerusalem as the place where much of it happened.

- There Melchezidek, king and priest of God Most High, reigned and served.
- There Abraham was willing to offer Isaac on the mount of the Lord where His perfect sacrifice would be provided.
- There David, Israel’s greatest earthly king, reigned and made it the kingdom’s capital.
- There the tabernacle of God found its fulfillment and permanence in the great temple David designed and Solomon built.
- There the institutions of sacrifice, worship, and priestly service were established for centuries.
- There Jesus recognized and honored the city and observed the feasts and temple rituals.
- There Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead.
- There the church was born in a day at Pentecost.
- There the apostles served and sent out the Gospel.

- There God will establish the physical, geographic center of His ultimate kingdom upon earth.

c. **The LORD loves the gates of Zion:** For all these reasons and more, God has special love for Jerusalem, regarding it even more than the rest of His Holy Land (Zec 2:12) and more than the territory of Israel in general (**more than all the dwellings of Jacob**).

i. "As the dwellings of Jacob in the promised land were beloved by him more than the dwellings of other nations, so he 'loved the gates of Sion more than the dwellings of Jacob.'" (Horne)

2. (3) *Zion praised.*

**Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God! Selah**

a. **Glorious things are spoken of you:** The psalmist praised Jerusalem by noting what others said about the city. Many spoke **glorious things** about the city.

- Glorious faith was exercised in Jerusalem.
- Glorious things happened in Jerusalem.
- Glorious things were taught in Jerusalem.
- Glorious worship was offered in Jerusalem.
- Glorious atonement was made in Jerusalem.
- Glorious anointing was poured out in Jerusalem.
- God's glorious presence was evident in Jerusalem.
- A glorious future awaits Jerusalem.

b. **O city of God:** God's special regard for Jerusalem does not take away from the fact that He is Lord and God over all the earth. Still, there is a special way in which Zion can be called the **city of God**, because out of

all the places He could have chosen, God chose *that place* to center His redemptive work for the whole world.

i. According to Boice, this line from verse 3 was the inspiration of the title and concept of Augustine's great work, *The City of God*.

B. The blessedness of the citizens of Zion.

1. (4) *Boasting over the citizens of Zion.*

"I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me;

Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia:

'This one was born there.'"

a. **I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon:** After a focus on Jerusalem itself, God spoke of the Gentile nations on every side of Israel, who were their rivals and often enemies. God promised that even among the rivals there would be **those who know Me** – those who have true relationship with Him.

i. "Rahab is Egypt, and so called for its strength and pride. Babel, the chief city of the Babylonians. These were deadly enemies to Jerusalem, which was ground between them as between a pair of millstones." (Trapp)

ii. "Tyre is the type of godless luxury and inflated material prosperity, and, though often in friendly alliance with Israel, as being exposed to the same foes which harassed her, she was as far from knowing God as the other nations were. Cush, or Ethiopia, seems mentioned as a type of distant peoples, rather than because of its hostility to Israel." (Maclaren)

iii. **Who know Me:** "A translation of the Hebrew verb *yadah*, which has a rich variety of meanings. It can mean 'know,' 'acknowledge,' 'understand,' 'be sure,' 'know about,' 'experience,' and other variations....

Here it means more than merely admitting that there is such a God as Jehovah or even acknowledging him as the one true God. It means coming to him in a saving relationship, bowing before him, and seeking to know him better.” (Boice)

b. **This one was born there:** This is both a promise and an invitation to the Gentile world. *They* could be accounted by God as the privileged **one** who **was born there** in Zion. They could be regarded as citizens of Jerusalem and be registered among God’s people.

i. This reminds us that even though God made His ancient covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, *relationship* with Him was not based on genetics. Anyone from the Gentile world was welcome to honor the God of Israel, surrender to His Lordship, and be reckoned among God’s people. This was true of Melchizedek, true of Rahab, true of Ruth, and true of Naaman.

ii. It is also a prophetic picture of what God would do in and through the Gospel, bringing Gentiles into true and real relationship with Him through a new birth. In a spiritual sense, it can be said of the one who is born again, **this one was born there**.

iii. “Thus, in a very short space, the psalmist indicates that in the day of God’s future blessing all the nations of the world (or at least representatives of all the nations of the world) will come to know and praise the true God.” (Boice)

iv. The confident words **this one was born there** are even more wonderful because the citizen referred to here does not say it of himself; *God* says it of him or her.

v. This also speaks of God's love and attention for the *individual*. "Man by man will the Lord reckon them, for they are each one precious in his sight; the individual shall not be lost in the mass, but each one shall be of high account." (Spurgeon)

2. (5-6) *God records the register of His people.*

**And of Zion it will be said,
"This one and that one were born in her;
And the Most High Himself shall establish her."
The LORD will record,
When He registers the peoples:
"This one was born there." Selah**

a. **Of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her"**: The psalmist repeated the thought from the previous verse and expanded it. The identification with Zion, the City of God, would be so wonderful and precious that it would be cherished to say, **"This one was born there."**

i. If a city is regarded as great or important, people enjoy identifying with that city. When we appreciate the high regard God has for **Zion**, the city of Jerusalem, we see the value in being regarded as her citizen, the city established by **the Most High Himself**.

ii. **Of Zion it will be said**: Kidner and others note that the Septuagint renders it something like this: *and Zion shall be called a mother*. Paul had this verse directly in mind in Gal 4:26 : *but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all*.

b. **The LORD will record, when He registers the peoples**: This citizenship and birthright is declared and recorded by God. It is **He** who **registers the peoples**.

i. The Bible clearly speaks of God's special regard toward the land of Israel, and for Jerusalem specifically. Yet the idea of being a citizen of Zion and being registered as a born-citizen of His City is *also* a spiritual concept. The New Testament speaks of a *heavenly* Zion and our registration there: *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven* (Heb 12:22-23). Paul also noted, *the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all* (Gal 4:26).

ii. In Jesus Christ, every believer can have the privilege of registration in Zion, of being a citizen of the heavenly City of God. This does not eliminate the special regard God has had, presently has, and will have for the literal land of Israel and Jerusalem, but it surpasses it.

iii. "Foreign nations are here described not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons." (Perowne, cited by Spurgeon)

iv. We can have the honor, the security, the confidence, the assurance that comes from it being said of us, **this one was born there**. "It will be an honour to any person to have been born in Zion. But how great is the honour to be *born from above*, and be a citizen of the Jerusalem that is from above! To be children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus!" (Clarke)

v. "Jehovah's census of his chosen will differ much from ours; he will count many whom we should have disowned, and he will leave out many whom we

should have reckoned. His registration is infallible.”
(Spurgeon)

3. (7) *The blessedness of Zion’s citizens.*

**Both the singers and the players on instruments say,
“All my springs are in you.”**

a. **Both the singers and the players on instruments say:** This point was so important that both the **singers** and **instruments** of Israel emphasized it. It’s possible that **instruments** here refers to *dancers*.

i. “The crowds in the earthly Jerusalem are celebrating with music, song, and possibly even dance. The verbal phrase ‘make music’ [**players of instruments**] is better translated as ‘dancing’.”
(VanGemeren)

b. **All my springs are in you:** The **springs** refer to the spontaneously flowing sources of water and to the life, refreshment, and to the goodness they bring to a dry land. These **springs are in you**, and according to Kidner, grammatically “**you**” can refer to Zion as a place or to God Himself. It is better to see it as a reference to God: **All my springs are in You** [God].

i. The goodness of God often comes to us like water from a spring. It seems to bubble up from a hidden, secret source.

ii. “What all these references are saying is that ‘every good and perfect gift is from above’ – that is, from God. All we are or hope to be, all we have or ever hope to have, all we attain or ever hope to attain is from him. The people of God acknowledge this and praise God for it.” (Boice)

iii. “If all my springs are in God, then *let all my streams flow to God*. All the rivers run into the sea, because they all came from the sea. It was from the

sea that the sun drew up the clouds which fed the thousand rills which fall into the rivers, and so the rivers run back to the sea. Let us do the same. What we have had from God must go to God.” (Spurgeon)

I Cry Out Day and Night Before You

Psa 88:1 LORD God, my savior, I cry out all day, and at night I come before you.

Psa 88:2 Hear my prayer; listen to my cry for help!

Psa 88:3 So many troubles have fallen on me that I am close to death.

Psa 88:4 I am like all others who are about to die; all my strength is gone.

Psa 88:5 I am abandoned among the dead; I am like the slain lying in their graves, those you have forgotten completely, who are beyond your help.

Psa 88:6 You have thrown me into the depths of the tomb, into the darkest and deepest pit.

Psa 88:7 Your anger lies heavy on me, and I am crushed beneath its waves.

Psa 88:8 You have caused my friends to abandon me; you have made me repulsive to them. I am closed in and cannot escape;

Psa 88:9 my eyes are weak from suffering. LORD, every day I call to you and lift my hands to you in prayer.

Psa 88:10 Do you perform miracles for the dead? Do they rise up and praise you?

Psa 88:11 Is your constant love spoken of in the grave or your faithfulness in the place of destruction?

Psa 88:12 Are your miracles seen in that place of darkness or your goodness in the land of the forgotten?

Psa 88:13 LORD, I call to you for help; every morning I pray to you.

Psa 88:14 Why do you reject me, LORD? Why do you turn away from me?

Psa 88:15 Ever since I was young, I have suffered and been near death; I am worn out from the burden of your punishments.

Psa 88:16 Your furious anger crushes me; your terrible attacks destroy me.

Psa 88:17 All day long they surround me like a flood; they close in on me from every side.

Psa 88:18 You have made even my closest friends abandon me, and darkness is my only companion.

Psalms 88:1-18

Psalms 88 – A Desperate Prayer from Deep Affliction

*This psalm is titled **A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. To the Chief Musician. Set to "Mahalath Leannoth."** A Contemplation of Heman the Ezrahite.*

*This psalm is **A Song**, yet a remarkably sad song, and is often regarded as the saddest psalm in the entire collection. **Mahalath Leannoth** seems to refer to the musical instrument upon which the song was composed. Psalms 53 also mentions the **Mahalath**.*

*Psalms 88 is one of the thirteen psalms called **A Contemplation**, which according to James Montgomery Boice might be better understood as "instruction."*

*As for the author and singer of the psalm, **Heman the Ezrahite**, there are many mentions of a Heman in the days of David and Solomon. Assuming that they all refer to the same man, he was noted for:*

- *His great wisdom (1Ki 4:31).*
- *His being a Kohathite, among the sons of Korah (1Ch 6:33).*

- *His musical ability and service (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 15:17-19; 1Ch 16:41-42; 1Ch 25:1; 2Ch 5:12; 2Ch 35:15).*
- *His many and exceptional sons and daughters (1Ch 25:5-6).*
- *His service to the king (1Ch 25:6).*

The identity of the singer of this dark song helps us to understand it. It came from a wise, talented, accomplished, and blessed man.

"A doleful ditty, beginning and ending with complaints; and therefore sung in the primitive times, among other penitential psalms, as the public confession of persons excommunicated." (John Trapp)

"In this Psalm, Heman makes a map of his life's history, he puts down all the dark places through which he has traveled. He mentions his sins, his sorrows, his hopes (if he had any), his fears, his woes, and so on. Now, that is real prayer, laying your case before the Lord." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. Prayer from the one under great affliction.

1. (1-2) Asking God to hear prayer in affliction.

**O LORD, God of my salvation,
I have cried out day and night before You.
Let my prayer come before You;
Incline Your ear to my cry.**

a. **O LORD, God of my salvation:** The opening line would lead us to expect a much more optimistic psalm. When the psalmist begins by extolling Yahweh as the **God of my salvation**, we expect that he experienced that rescue, that deliverance in the moment. This was not the case. This title was both in past remembrance and clinging to a future hope. It is one of the small glimmers of light in an otherwise dark psalm.

i. "The only ray of comfortable light which shines throughout the Psalm. The writer has salvation, he is sure of that, and God is the sole author of it. While a man can see God as his Saviour, it is not altogether midnight with him." (Spurgeon)

ii. "To address God as the God of his salvation, to discern His hand in the infliction of sorrows, is the operation of true though feeble faith. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,' is the very spirit of this psalm." (Maclaren)

iii. "From beginning to end there is no trace of bitterness, no desire for revenge on enemies, no angry reflections on the goodness of God. Rather, the references to God reveal a remarkable sense of His grace and goodness." (Morgan)

b. **Let my prayer come before You:** The prayer was passionate (**cried out**) and constant (**day and night**). The psalmist was desperate for God to bend toward Him to hear and answer his prayer.

i. **I have cried out:** "The prayer is a deeply piercing shout. Though *rinnah* may denote a shout of joy in other contexts (cf. 47:1; 105:43), it is here a loud cry for divine help. The psalmist shouts loudly to the Lord, hoping that he will hear." (VanGemeren)

ii. No matter how deep and dark Heman's affliction was, he could still talk to God about it. "Despair sometimes strikes men silent, and sometimes makes them eloquent." (Maclaren)

iii. "He did not cast out brutish and wild complaints and moans in misery, as it is natural for people to do, but poured forth his soul into God's blessed bosom, and now prayeth an answer." (Trapp)

2. (3-5) *The depth of affliction.*

**For my soul is full of troubles,
And my life draws near to the grave.
I am counted with those who go down to the pit;
I am like a man *who has* no strength,
Adrift among the dead,
Like the slain who lie in the grave,
Whom You remember no more,
And who are cut off from Your hand.**

a. **My soul is full of troubles:** The agony was not superficial. It went down deep to the soul. It was inward in the **soul** and outward, threatening his physical life (**my life draws near to the grave**). Others expected the psalmist to die (**I am counted with those who go down to the pit**).

i. "The emotions and suffering expressed by the psalmist are close in spirit to those of Psalms 22. In the tradition of the church, these psalms were linked together in the Scripture reading on Good Friday." (VanGemeren)

ii. **My soul is full of troubles:** "The psalmist has found the quickest argument before his God. There is nothing that so quickly makes the bell ring in heaven as the touch of a troubled hand." (Meyer)

iii. "He had his house full and his hands full of sorrow; but, worse than that, he had his heart full of it. Trouble in the soul is the soul of trouble." (Spurgeon)

b. **Adrift among the dead:** The psalmist was so weak and afflicted that he felt, and others regarded him, as practically dead already. Death seemed to pull on him as he was passively **adrift** and **like the slain**.

c. **Whom You remember no more:** The singer dreaded death, fearing that it would mean being cut off not only

from earthly relationships, but also from his relationship with God.

i. As with Psalms 6 and other passages, it is wrong to take these agonized words as evidence that there is no life beyond death. The Old Testament has a shadowy understanding of the world beyond. Sometimes it shows a clear confidence (Job 19:25), and sometimes it has the uncertainty shown here.

ii. "Such thoughts are in startling contrast with the hopes that sparkle in some psalms (such as Psa 16:10, etc.), and they show that clear, permanent assurance of future blessedness was not granted to the ancient Church. Nor could there be sober certainty of it until after Christ's resurrection. But it is also to be noticed that this psalm neither affirms nor denies a future resurrection." (Maclaren)

iii. The book of Psalms and the Old Testament in general do not present a comprehensive theology of the world beyond. The book of Psalms expresses the agony, fear, and uncertainty of death's doorstep. The singers in the psalms often *know* they can remember God and give Him thanks now, but don't have the same certainty about the world beyond.

iv. "At rare moments the Psalms have glimpses of rescue from Sheol, in terms that suggest resurrection, or a translation like that of Enoch or Elijah (*cf.* 16:10; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24)." (Kidner)

v. 2Ti 1:10 says that Jesus *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. The understanding of the after-life was murky at best in the Old Testament; but Jesus let us know more about heaven and hell than anyone else could. Jesus could do this because He had first-hand knowledge of the world beyond.

B. The Divine source of affliction.

1. (6-7) You, God, have brought me low.

You have laid me in the lowest pit,

In darkness, in the depths.

Your wrath lies heavy upon me,

And You have afflicted *me* with all Your waves. Selah

a. **You have laid me in the lowest pit:** Boldly, the psalmist tells God what he feels and experiences – that *God Himself* has caused His downfall, setting him **in darkness, in the depths**.

b. **Your wrath lies heavy upon me:** It seemed that the source of the affliction was the righteous **wrath** of God. The psalmist had a deep sense of his own sinfulness. Even as he felt himself sinking under **all Your waves**, he did not protest that God's wrath was unfair.

i. "The wrath of God is the very hell of hell, and when it weighs upon the conscience a man feels a torment such as only that of damned spirits can exceed." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Yet the most important similarity [with Job] is that God had caused Job's suffering, if not directly, at least by permitting Satan to afflict him – Job was unable to imagine why – and this is what the psalmist is claiming too. These similarities are so great, including even certain echoes of language that Franz Delitzsch has suggested that Job and the psalm might even be by the same author, Heman the Ezrahite." (Boice)

iii. **Selah:** "There was need to rest. Above the breakers the swimmer lifts his head and looks around him, breathing for a moment, until the next wave comes. Even lamentation must have its pauses." (Spurgeon)

2. (8-9a) You, God, have made me alone.

**You have put away my acquaintances far from me;
You have made me an abomination to them;
I am shut up, and I cannot get out;
My eye wastes away because of affliction.**

a. **You have put away my acquaintances far from me:** In his affliction, his former friends wanted nothing to do with him. This also was seen as God's doing.

i. "His situation resembles that of Job, as his friends did not understand him. More than that, our Lord's suffering on earth was such that his own disciples forsook him (cf. Luk 23:49).\" (VanGemeren)

ii. **You have made me an abomination to them:** \"If taken literally, it points to some loathsome disease, which had long clung to him, and made even his friends shrink from companionship, and thus had condemned him to isolation. All these details suggest leprosy, which, if referred to here, is most probably to be taken, as sickness is in several psalms, as symbolic of affliction.\" (Maclaren)

iii. \"Even more telling than the metaphors of dungeons and deep waters is the remembered look on the faces of his fellow men, a revulsion which isolates him in the narrow prison of himself.\" (Kidner)

b. **I am shut up, and I cannot get out:** Perhaps worst of all, the psalmist felt that there was *no escape*. Life was draining from him and if God did not respond, there seemed to be no remedy.

C. The urgent prayer from the afflicted one.

1. (9b-12) *I need Your help in the land of the living.*

**LORD, I have called daily upon You;
I have stretched out my hands to You.
Will You work wonders for the dead?
Shall the dead arise *and* praise You? Selah**

**Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction?
Shall Your wonders be known in the dark?
And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?**

a. **I have called daily upon You:** The psalmist reminded God of his constant prayer, made in the familiar Hebrew posture of **stretched out** hands to God.

b. **Will You work wonders for the dead?** Because the psalmist was uncertain of the world beyond, he diligently asked God to answer his prayer and meet his need soon, when he knew that he could receive God's **wonders** and speak of the **lovingkindness** and **faithfulness** of God.

i. The way these verses refer to the world beyond is a good illustration of the uncertainty that the Old Testament writers often demonstrated regarding what lay beyond this life:

- **The dead.**
- **The grave.**
- **The place of destruction.**
- **The dark.**
- **The land of forgetfulness.**

ii. We know that the world beyond is not these things, but the psalmist did not yet have that revelation.

2. (13-15) I need You to break the silence.

**But to You I have cried out, O LORD,
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.
LORD, why do You cast off my soul?
Why do You hide Your face from me?
I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth;
I suffer Your terrors;
I am distraught.**

a. **To You I have cried out:** After a brief focus on the terror and uncertainty of the grave, the psalmist once again set his focus on the LORD. Like David, he sought God **in the morning** (Psa 5:3; Psa 55:17; Psa 59:16).

i. **In the morning:** “Early, come to thee, before the ordinary time of morning prayer, or before the dawning of the day, or the rising of the sun. The sense is, Though I have hitherto got no answer to my prayers, yet I will not give over praying nor hoping for an answer.” (Poole)

ii. **In the morning my prayer comes before You:** “The secret of it is that with determination he keeps himself in touch with God, crying to Him, and going out to meet Him at the break of each new day.” (Morgan)

b. **Why do You hide Your face from me?** The sad idea from earlier in the psalm is repeated. The worst of the psalmist’s afflictions was the sense that God had in some way forsaken him, that his **soul** was **cast off** from God. He simply sang: **I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught.**

3. (16-18) *I need You to rescue me from Your wrath.*

Your fierce wrath has gone over me;

Your terrors have cut me off.

They came around me all day long like water;

They engulfed me altogether.

Loved one and friend You have put far from me,

And my acquaintances into darkness.

a. **Your fierce wrath has gone over me:** Continuing the thought from the previous lines, the psalmist understood that in some way God was the source of his present affliction. If he suffered terrors, he could say to God they were “**Your terrors.**” Even in his affliction, the

psalmist believed in God. This was a crisis, but it was a crisis of *faith*, not of unbelief.

i. **Your fierce wrath:** “In Psa 88:16 the word for wrath is in the plural, to express the manifold outbursts of that deadly indignation. The word means literally heat; and we may represent the psalmist’s thought as being that the wrath shoots forth many fierce tongues of licking flame, or, like a lava stream, pours out in many branches.” (Maclaren)

b. **They engulfed me altogether:** Afflicted and alone (**loved one and friend You have put far from me**), the psalmist felt overwhelmed, as if he were about to drown in his misery. The psalm here ends, with no answer but a continued cry to God, who alone can rescue from such distress and despair.

i. “The happy ending of most psalms of this kind is seen to be a bonus, not a due; its withholding is not a proof of either God’s displeasure or his defeat.” (Kidner)

c. **And my acquaintances into darkness:** Many take this phrase in a different sense, such as the NIV: *the darkness is my closest friend*. The agonized cry of this psalm, together with its absence of anger or bitterness against God, shows that there is a real sense in which the psalmist’s darkness has been a friend. It has – in a deep and even terrible way – brought him into closer trust and relationship with God.

i. When Paul Simon began the song *Sound of Silence* with the phrase, *Hello darkness, my old friend*, he was not the first to express the idea. This seems to be Heman’s sense. “‘*And mine acquaintance into darkness,*’ or better still, *my acquaintance is darkness*. I am familiar only with sadness, all else has vanished. I am a child crying alone in the dark. Will

the heavenly Father leave his child there?" (Spurgeon)

ii. When we remember that Heman wrote this psalm, who lived a blessed life in many ways (see notes on this psalm's title), we realize that God used even this painful season for good.

iii. "This supposedly Godforsaken author seems to have been one of the pioneers of the singing guilds set up by David, to which we owe the Korahite psalms (43-49; 84f.; 87f.), one of the richest veins in the Psalter. Burdened and despondent as he was, his existence was far from pointless. If it was a living death, in God's hands it was to bear much fruit." (Kidner)

iv. "We thank God that there is one such song as this, with its revelation of what results in character when a soul, in the midst of the most appalling suffering, still maintains the activity of practiced relationship with God. We have also met such souls, and their witness to the power of the Divine grace is more potent than any theoretical expositions." (Morgan)

I Will Sing of the Steadfast Love of the Lord

Psa 89:1 O LORD, I will always sing of your constant love; I will proclaim your faithfulness forever.

Psa 89:2 I know that your love will last for all time, that your faithfulness is as permanent as the sky.

Psa 89:3 You said, "I have made a covenant with the man I chose; I have promised my servant David,

Psa 89:4 'A descendant of yours will always be king; I will preserve your dynasty forever.' "

Psa 89:5 The heavens sing of the wonderful things you do; the holy ones sing of your faithfulness, LORD.

Psa 89:6 No one in heaven is like you, LORD; none of the heavenly beings is your equal.

Psa 89:7 You are feared in the council of the holy ones; they all stand in awe of you.

Psa 89:8 LORD God Almighty, none is as mighty as you; in all things you are faithful, O LORD.

Psa 89:9 You rule over the powerful sea; you calm its angry waves.

Psa 89:10 You crushed the monster Rahab and killed it; with your mighty strength you defeated your enemies.

Psa 89:11 Heaven is yours, the earth also; you made the world and everything in it.

Psa 89:12 You created the north and the south; Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon sing to you for joy.

Psa 89:13 How powerful you are! How great is your strength!

Psa 89:14 Your kingdom is founded on righteousness and justice; love and faithfulness are shown in all you do.

Psa 89:15 How happy are the people who worship you with songs, who live in the light of your kindness!

Psa 89:16 Because of you they rejoice all day long, and they praise you for your goodness.

Psa 89:17 You give us great victories; in your love you make us triumphant.

Psa 89:18 You, O LORD, chose our protector; you, the Holy God of Israel, gave us our king.

Psa 89:19 In a vision long ago you said to your faithful servants, "I have given help to a famous soldier; I have given the throne to one I chose from the people.

Psa 89:20 I have made my servant David king by anointing him with holy oil.

Psa 89:21 My strength will always be with him, my power will make him strong.

Psa 89:22 His enemies will never succeed against him; the wicked will not defeat him.

Psa 89:23 I will crush his foes and kill everyone who hates him.

Psa 89:24 I will love him and be loyal to him; I will make him always victorious.

Psa 89:25 I will extend his kingdom from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates River.

Psa 89:26 He will say to me, 'You are my father and my God; you are my protector and savior.'

Psa 89:27 I will make him my first-born son, the greatest of all kings.

Psa 89:28 I will always keep my promise to him, and my covenant with him will last forever.

Psa 89:29 His dynasty will be as permanent as the sky; a descendant of his will always be king.

Psa 89:30 "But if his descendants disobey my law and do not live according to my commands,

Psa 89:31 if they disregard my instructions and do not keep my commandments,

Psa 89:32 then I will punish them for their sins; I will make them suffer for their wrongs.

Psa 89:33 But I will not stop loving David or fail to keep my promise to him.

Psa 89:34 I will not break my covenant with him or take back even one promise I made him.

Psa 89:35 "Once and for all I have promised by my holy name: I will never lie to David.

Psa 89:36 He will always have descendants, and I will watch over his kingdom as long as the sun shines.

Psa 89:37 It will be as permanent as the moon, that faithful witness in the sky."

Psa 89:38 But you are angry with your chosen king; you have deserted and rejected him.

Psa 89:39 You have broken your covenant with your servant and thrown his crown in the dirt.

Psa 89:40 You have torn down the walls of his city and left his forts in ruins.

Psa 89:41 All who pass by steal his belongings; all his neighbors laugh at him.

Psa 89:42 You have given the victory to his enemies; you have made them all happy.

Psa 89:43 You have made his weapons useless and let him be defeated in battle.

Psa 89:44 You have taken away his royal scepter and knocked his throne to the ground.

Psa 89:45 You have made him old before his time and covered him with disgrace.

Psa 89:46 LORD, will you hide yourself forever? How long will your anger burn like fire?

Psa 89:47 Remember how short my life is; remember that you created all of us mortal!

Psa 89:48 Who can live and never die? How can we humans keep ourselves from the grave?

Psa 89:49 Lord, where are the former proofs of your love? Where are the promises you made to David?

Psa 89:50 Don't forget how I, your servant, am insulted, how I endure all the curses of the heathen.

Psa 89:51 Your enemies insult your chosen king, O LORD! They insult him wherever he goes.

Psa 89:52 Praise the LORD forever! Amen! Amen!

Psalms 89:1-52

Psalms 89 – The Incomparable God and His Covenant to David

*The title of this psalm is **A Contemplation of Ethan the Ezrahite**. There are several men named **Ethan** in the Hebrew Scriptures, but this man is mentioned specifically in 1Ki 4:31 as someone who was famous for his wisdom – yet surpassed by Solomon’s greater wisdom. This means he was likely a contemporary of Solomon and was also alive during the reign of David.*

"Ethan is probably identical with Jeduthun, who founded one of the three choirs (cf. 1Ch 15:19; 2Ch 5:12). Ethan shared with Heman a reputation for wisdom." (Derek Kidner)

A. The incomparable God and His covenant to David.

1. (1-2) Forever mercy and faithfulness.

**I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever;
With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness
to all generations.
For I have said, "Mercy shall be built up forever;
Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very
heavens."**

a. **I will sing of the mercies of the LORD:** Ethan began this psalm with a declaration of praise in song, focused on the **mercies** (from the word *hesed*, sometimes thought of as covenant love or loyal love) of Yahweh. The great lovingkindness of God lasts forever, so the praise of Him should also be sung **forever**.

i. This is a psalm with a lot of trouble, but the presence of trouble didn’t silence the psalmist’s praise; he sang of God’s **mercies**. "We have not one, but many *mercies* to rejoice in, and should therefore multiply the expressions of our thankfulness." (Spurgeon)

ii. "We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining; but we do more, we get joy, by praising.

Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving." (Matthew Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Will I make known Your faithfulness:** Ethan not only experienced the **mercies** and **faithfulness** of God; he also wanted to **make** them **known** to others. This was for their benefit, that they might also experience God's faithfulness and mercy. More importantly he wanted to spread the glory and fame of God as broadly as possible.

i. Ethan knew something of how good God was; it was fitting that others also know, and he was determined to tell them.

c. **Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish:** Ethan **said** this to declare the goodness of God. He noted the permanent, enduring character of God's **mercy** and **faithfulness**, and how *God* had **established** these things.

i. **Mercy shall be built up forever:** The word **mercy** is "...another of the key words in 2 Samuel 7, with its play on the theme of the house David would have built for God, and the living house God would build instead for David." (Kidner)

ii. "A building is an orderly thing as well as a fixed thing. There is a scheme and design about it. Mercy shall be built. God has gone about blessing us with designs that only his own infinite perfections could have completed." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) *God's covenant with David.*

**"I have made a covenant with My chosen,
I have sworn to My servant David:
'Your seed I will establish forever,
And build up your throne to all generations.'"** Selah

a. **I have made a covenant:** As an expression of the *mercies* and *faithfulness* mentioned in the previous verses, Ethan noted the covenant God made with David as described in 2 Samuel 7. There, God promised to build and establish the house of David.

i. Ethan's mention of the covenant shows that it was public knowledge in the days of David and Solomon. People knew what God promised to David, and they understood that Solomon fulfilled it only partially.

b. **Your seed I will establish forever:** God promised David, *I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom (2Sa 7:12)*. This promise was partially fulfilled in Solomon, the direct son of David and immediate heir to his throne. It would be most perfectly fulfilled in the One known as the *Son of David* – the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Mat 12:23).

i. "We have an incontestable proof, that the covenant with David had Messiah for its object; that Solomon was a figure of him; and that the Scripture hath sometimes a double sense." (Horne)

c. **And build up your throne to all generations:** God promised David, *I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2Sa 7:13)*. Again, this was fulfilled in an immediate and partial way with Solomon, but in a full and perfect way with Jesus the Messiah.

i. "The pledge to David is also extended to his descendants (v.4) and thereby to the future generation of subjects. The Lord himself will secure the rule of the Davidic dynasty." (VanGemeren)

d. **Selah:** Ethan believed that the wonderful generosity and faithfulness of God in such a promise was worthy of emphasis and meditation, so he instructed the musical pause **Selah**.

3. (5-10) *God praised for His faithfulness and might.*

**And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints.
For who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD?**

Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LORD?

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the

**saints,
And to be held in reverence by all *those* around Him.
O LORD God of hosts,
Who *is* mighty like You, O LORD?
Your faithfulness also surrounds You.
You rule the raging of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them.
You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one who is slain;
You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty
arm.**

a. **The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD:**
Ethan was probably familiar with David's words in Psalms 19 : *The heavens declare the glory of God*. God was not only to be praised for His **faithfulness...in the assembly of the saints**, but for His staggering work of creation.

i. Several commentators regard the reference to **the saints, the sons of the mighty, and the assembly of the saints** to mean angelic beings. If so, Ethan the psalmist brought together all creation to recognize the greatness and majesty of God.

ii. "Earth and heaven are one in admiring and adoring the covenant God: Saints above see most clearly into the heights and depths of divine love, therefore, they praise its wonders; and saints below, being conscious of their many sins and multiplied provocations of the Lord, admire his faithfulness." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Did not 'the heavens praise the wonders of Jehovah,' when a choir of angels descended from above, to sing an anthem, at the birth of Christ? And how must the celestial courts have resounded with the hallelujahs of those blessed spirits, when they again receive their King, returning in triumph from the conquest of his enemies?" (Horne)

iv. **Your wonders...Your faithfulness:** "They praise God's 'wonder' (which here means, not so much His marvellous acts, as the wonderfulness of His Being, His incomparable greatness and power), and His Faithfulness, the two guarantees of the fulfilment of His promises." (Maclaren)

b. **Who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD?** God's greatness means that He is also *incomparable*. He is not to be measured on the scale used to measure the greatness of men or even angels (if **sons of the mighty** refers to angelic beings).

i. God's incomparability is an aspect of His *holiness*. *Holy* means apartness; God is incomparably greater than all created things.

c. **God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints:** Understanding the incomparability (holiness) of God should bring forth a sense of awe and praise from His people, especially as they meet together. He is **to be held in reverence by all those around Him**.

i. "Irreverence is rebellion. Thoughts of the covenant of grace tend to create a deeper awe of God." (Spurgeon)

d. **Who is mighty like You, O LORD?** Ethan continued his meditation on the incomparability of God with attention to His might, expressed in His ability to control unruly creation. This unruly creation is described as **the raging of the sea** and the defeat of **Rahab**.

i. "The extent of the ocean, the multitude of the waves, and their fury when excited by a storm, render it, in that state, the most tremendous object in nature." (Horne)

ii. "The ruling of the raging of the sea, the stilling of the stormy waves, and the breaking and scattering of

the might of Egypt are used by the psalmist to illustrate the omnipotence of Jehovah, before which the mightiest monarchy on earth had no more power than if it had been a corpse.” (Spurgeon)

e. **You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one who is slain: Rahab** is often taken as a personification of proud and strong Egypt. This may be true in this context, yet there is also a fascinating connection to the Canaanite mythology of that time, transforming and using that connection to glorify God as in the Incomparable One.

i. The name **Rahab** means *proud one*, and in Canaanite mythology the sea god *Yam* was subdued, and the sea serpent Rahab was killed at creation. Here, as in Job 26:12-13 (which perhaps Ethan had in mind), this Canaanite mythology is transformed and used to teach.

ii. Later the prophet Isaiah would use the same imagery and tone in speaking of Yahweh’s great victory over Rahab: *Are You not the arm that cut Rahab apart, and wounded the serpent?* (Isa 51:9)

iii. In the ancient Middle East, there were many legends about the gods who fought other gods in creating the earth. Ethan, Asaph, Job, and Isaiah may have known those stories and used them to draw attention to the true God, Yahweh. It is Yahweh who rules **the raging of the sea**, even though ancient legends said that Tiamat (the Deep) was the chaotic goddess defeated by the hero god Marduk (Bel), or that Yam (the Sea) was defeated by Baal. It is Yahweh who cuts **Rahab in pieces**, not Marduk or Baal.

iv. There is the possibility that there is a grain of historical truth communicated in these ancient mythologies and legends. Ancient rabbinic

mythologies suggest that an evil serpent was in the primeval sea resisting creation, and that God killed the serpent and brought order to the world as described in Gen 1:1-2.

v. Satan is often represented as a dragon or a serpent (Genesis 3; Revelation 12, 13), and the sea is thought of as a dangerous or threatening place in the Jewish mind (

Isa 57:20; Mar 4:39; Rev 21:1). It's possible that Rahab is another serpent-like manifestation of Satan, who was the original *proud one* (**Rahab**). It is also possible that *Leviathan* refers to the same creature (as in Job 3:8, Job 41:1, Psa 74:14, and Isa 27:1).

vi. It is important to note that the Hebrew Scriptures do not simply believe or adopt this Canaanite mythology; they take it and transform it, using it to exalt Yahweh in a way that the Canaanite myths never did. Elmer B. Smick notes this in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* on Job: "Here the sea that God subdues is not the deity Yam. Job depersonalized Yam by using the definite article (the sea), thus expressing his innate monotheistic theology.... Further, by his own wisdom, skill, and power he 'cut Rahab to pieces' and 'pierced the gliding serpent,' unlike Marduk who depended on the enablement of the father-gods."

vii. "A study of the Old Testament names for the well-known Canaanite mythological sea monsters like Rahab shows how purposefully the Old Testament authors used the language to enrich their own poetic conceptions of the supremacy of the one and only true God." (Smick)

4. (11-14) *The glory and strength of God in heaven and on earth.*

**The heavens *are* Yours, the earth also *is* Yours;
The world and all its fullness, You have founded them.
The north and the south, You have created them;
Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name.
You have a mighty arm;
Strong is Your hand, *and* high is Your right hand.
Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of Your throne;
Mercy and truth go before Your face.**

a. **The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all its fullness:** In the previous verses, the psalmist Ethan transformed a Canaanite myth to show that Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, performs all things and no other god had that power. In these verses, he stated the same principle in different words, proclaiming that no other god or gods created or maintains the **heavens** or the **earth**. The **fullness** of the entire world, **the north and the south**, all belong to God.

i. "Turn to all points of the compass, and behold the Lord is there. The regions of snow and the gardens of the sun are his dominions: both the land of the dawning and the home of the setting sun rejoice to own his sway." (Spurgeon)

b. **Strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand:** The skill and strength of men are often expressed in the arm and hands, especially the **right hand**. Ethan applied this principle in a metaphor to God, expressing His skill and strength.

i. **You have a mighty arm:** The psalmist knew this; we have greater reason to know it. The psalmist knew it because of God's might in creation and in Israel's deliverance from Egypt. We know those same things, but we can also see God's **mighty arm** in much

greater work of Jesus Messiah and what He did in His life, teaching, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection.

c. **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne:** The psalmist praised the incomparable might of God, but he did not ignore God's *moral* greatness. Yahweh has the right to reign merely because of His omnipotence, but His nature demands that **righteousness and justice** mark His rule; the **foundation** of His **throne** and **mercy and truth go before** His face.

i. **Mercy and truth go before Your face:** "These shall be the *heralds* that shall announce the coming of the Judge. His *truth* binds him to fulfill all his declarations; and his *mercy* shall be shown to all those who have fled for refuge to the hope that is set before them in the Gospel." (Clarke)

5. (15-18) *The blessedness of those who know the incomparable God.*

**Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!
They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.
In Your name they rejoice all day long,
And in Your righteousness they are exalted.
For You are the glory of their strength,
And in Your favor our horn is exalted.
For our shield *belongs* to the LORD,
And our king to the Holy One of Israel.**

a. **Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound:** Those who know the joyful sound of this truth – of God in His incomparable might, His righteousness and justice, and His mercy and truth – are a **blessed** people, and blessed in many ways.

- They enjoy the favor and fellowship of God's face: **They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.**

- They **rejoice all day long** in the **name** – the character and nature – of the incomparable God.

- They find their strength in God, especially in His **favor**: **You are the glory of their strength.**

- They enjoy God's protection: **Our shield belongs to the LORD.**

- i. **You are the glory of their strength:** "It is the duty of Christians, as it was that of Israelites, to ascribe all their strength, their success, and their glory, whether in matters temporal or spiritual, to Jehovah alone." (Horne)

- b. **And our king to the Holy One of Israel:** A further blessing is that God takes a particular interest in their **king**. The following lines of the psalm suggest that this **king** was David.

B. The vision to God's holy one regarding the covenant with David.

1. (19-24) God's help to the king.

**Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one,
And said: "I have given help to *one who is* mighty;
I have exalted one chosen from the people.
I have found My servant David;
With My holy oil I have anointed him,
With whom My hand shall be established;
Also My arm shall strengthen him.
The enemy shall not outwit him,
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
I will beat down his foes before his face,
And plague those who hate him.**

**But My faithfulness and My mercy *shall be* with him,
And in My name his horn shall be exalted."**

a. **I have given help to one who is mighty:** The previous lines (verse 18) spoke of God's special interest in the ruler of His people. Here some of the result of that interest is described. Speaking **in a vision** to the king (**Your holy one**), God promised to strengthen and **help** the ruler.

i. Spurgeon thought the **holy one** in this context was Nathan the prophet, not David. "The holy one here meant may be either David or Nathan the prophet, but most probably the latter, for it was to him that the word of the Lord came by night (2Sa 7:4-5)."
(Spurgeon)

b. **I have exalted one chosen from the people:** The son of Jesse – **David** – was not from a noble or especially influential family, but **from the people**. Nevertheless, God **found** him and regarded him as His **servant**.

i. "Here was no self-made king and empire-builder, carving out a career for himself." (Kidner)

ii. Spurgeon pointed out three similarities to Jesus from the phrase, **I have exalted one chosen from the people:**

- Jesus was *extracted* from the people.
- Jesus was *elected* by God from among the people.
- Jesus was *exalted* above the people.

c. **I have found My servant David:** In this section of the psalm, God described the many blessings He placed upon David, the man after His own heart (1Sa 13:14).

- The blessing of help (**I have given help**).

- The blessing of exaltation (**I have exalted**).
- The blessing of election (**one chosen from the people**).
- The blessing of anointing (**I have anointed him**).
- The blessing of security (**with whom My hand shall be established**).
- The blessing of God's own strength (**My arm shall strengthen him**).
- The blessing of protection (**the enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him**).
- The blessing of vindication (**I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague those who hate him**).
- The blessing of ongoing faithfulness and mercy (**My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him**).
- The blessing of exalted strength (**in My name his horn shall be exalted**).

i. **I have anointed:** "More important than any crown was the fact of being *anointed*, and so set apart for sacred office; it was this that gave rise, in due course, to the title Messiah or Christ." (Kidner)

ii. **I will beat down his foes before his face:** "These verses complement Psalms 2, where the Lord's anointed receives full authority to subjugate all resistance of God's enemies on earth. The real source of David's power and authority lies in the Lord's presence and purpose." (VanGemeren)

iii. "None of his enemies shall be able to prevail against him. It is worthy of remark that David was never overthrown; he finally conquered every foe that rose up against him. Saul's persecution, Absalom's revolt, Sheba's conspiracy, and the

struggle made by the partisans of the house of Saul after his death, only tended to call forth David's skill, courage, and prowess, and to seat him more firmly on his throne." (Clarke)

2. (25-29) *More blessings to the king.*

**Also I will set his hand over the sea,
And his right hand over the rivers.
He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.'
Also I will make him *My* firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.
My mercy I will keep for him forever,
And My covenant shall stand firm with him.
His seed also I will make *to endure* forever,
And his throne as the days of heaven."**

a. **I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers:** This promised a dominion that David never seemed to fulfill. As the previous section spoke of the blessings God promised to David, the promises gradually become of a nature in which their perfect fulfillment was only in David's greater Son, the *Seed* of David (verses 4, 29, 36).

b. **You are my Father:** This was true for David, but even more true for Jesus the Messiah, who did all things looking to and in dependency on God the Father (Joh 5:19; Joh 8:28).

c. **I will make him My firstborn:** This was true of David in the sense that even though he was the youngest of many brothers (1Sa 16:11), God gave him the prominence and favor associated with the **firstborn**. That prominence and favor was even truer of Jesus, the Son of David – made **the highest of the kings of the earth** (1Ti 6:15, Rev 19:16).

i. "*First-born* is not always to be understood *literally* in Scripture. It often signifies simply a *well-beloved*, or *best-beloved son*; one preferred to all the rest, and distinguished by some eminent prerogative. Thus God calls Israel

his son, his first-born, Exo 4:22." (Clarke)

d. **My mercy I will keep for him forever:** This **mercy** to David's house was promised in the **covenant** God made with him (2Sa 7:15).

i. **My covenant shall stand firm:** "With Jesus the covenant is ratified both by blood of sacrifice and by oath of God; it cannot be cancelled or altered, but is an eternal verity, resting upon the veracity of one who cannot lie." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Never forget that, when once God has entered into covenant with a soul, He will stand to it, till the heavens be no more." (Meyer)

e. **His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven:** This promise from the Davidic covenant (2Sa 7:16) is only fulfilled in the **forever** reign of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

3. (30-37) *The promises of the Davidic covenant repeated.*

**"If his sons forsake My law
And do not walk in My judgments,
If they break My statutes
And do not keep My commandments,
Then I will punish their transgression with the rod,
And their iniquity with stripes.
Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take
from him,
Nor allow My faithfulness to fail.
My covenant I will not break,
Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.**

**Once I have sworn by My holiness;
I will not lie to David:
His seed shall endure forever,
And his throne as the sun before Me;
It shall be established forever like the moon,
Even *like* the faithful witness in the sky.” Selah**

a. **If his sons forsake My law:** All of those in David’s royal line had some part of this Davidic covenant. Some of these were disobedient kings, and God brought considerable correction to both the kings and the kingdom.

i. **I will punish their transgression with the rod:** “Not with the sword, not with death and destruction; but still with a smarting, tingling, painful rod.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him:** As described in the Davidic covenant, Yahweh would never completely take His *hesed*, His covenant love, from the house of David (2Sa 7:14-16). Yahweh would remain faithful to His **covenant** and His **word**.

i. **I have sworn by My holiness:** “God here pledges the crown of his kingdom, the excellent beauty of his person, the essence of his nature. He does as good as say that if he ceases to be true to his covenant he will have forfeited his holy character. What more can he say? In what stronger language can he express his unalterable adherence to the truth of his promise?” (Spurgeon)

c. **His throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon:** God’s promises to David regarding his royal house and the reigning Messiah to come from that house were constant, like the sun and the moon, the **faithful witness in the sky**.

i. **His throne as the sun before Me:** “Splendid and glorious! Dispensing light, heat, life, and salvation to all mankind.” (Clarke)

C. The covenant and the crisis.

1. (38-45) *The feeling that God had forsaken His covenant promises to David.*

**But You have cast off and abhorred,
You have been furious with Your anointed.
You have renounced the covenant of Your servant;
You have profaned his crown *by casting it* to the
ground.
You have broken down all his hedges;
You have brought his strongholds to ruin.
All who pass by the way plunder him;
He is a reproach to his neighbors.
You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries;
You have made all his enemies rejoice.
You have also turned back the edge of his sword,
And have not sustained him in the battle.
You have made his glory cease,
And cast his throne down to the ground.
The days of his youth You have shortened;
You have covered him with shame. Selah**

a. **But You have cast off and abhorred:** The first 37 verses of this psalm soared with confidence in God’s incomparable greatness and in His covenant to David. Here, the tone suddenly shifted as Ethan considered some present crisis, which seemed to be all the worse when contrasted with his understanding of God’s greatness and faithfulness to the covenant with David.

i. Because we don’t know the exact time Ethan wrote, we don’t know the crisis that prompted this desperate cry.

- It might have been Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15-18).
- It might have been the spiritual decline of Solomon (1 Kings 11).
- It might have been the rapid and radical decline of the kingdom after Solomon's death (1 Kings 12).
- It might have been a crisis not recorded in the Bible.

ii. "With an honesty found consistently in the psalms but often lacking in ourselves, it also describes a situation in which God has not seemed to be faithful, and it asks, 'Where is your faithfulness?'" (Boice)

iii. "But these glorious promises are set in sharpest contrast with a doleful present, which seems to contradict them." (Maclaren)

iv. "Taken as a whole, this song is one of the finest in the collection as a revelation of how the man of faith is compelled to view calamity." (Morgan)

b. You have renounced the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown by casting it to the ground: Ethan's words here seem a shocking contradiction to what he wrote earlier in the psalm, in which he demonstrated the full confidence of faith and the true report of his feelings. Ethan *knew* God had not **renounced the covenant**, but in the present crisis it *felt* like it.

i. "*Renounced* may be too decisive a word for this rare verb, whose meaning has to be guessed from its parallel terms, *i.e.* 'defiled' (Psa 89:39 b) and 'scorned' (Lam 2:7 a). Perhaps 'disdained' or 'held cheap' would be more accurate. It is in any case the language of experience, not an accusation of bad faith." (Kidner)

ii. **You have:** "Yet all this is spoken of as the work of Jehovah. The key phrase to this portion is, 'Thou hast.'" (Morgan)

iii. To think that God has allowed such disaster is painful. However, it's even more painful to think that God had nothing to do with it, and we are at the mercy of random events, fate, and luck.

c. **The days of his youth You have shortened; you have covered him with shame:** The king himself – David, Solomon, or a later king – was personally affected and weakened by the crisis. The promises of God through the Davidic covenant *seemed* empty at the time.

i. **Selah:** "*Selah*. The interceding poet takes breath amid his lament, and then turns from describing the sorrows of the kingdom to pleading with the Lord." (Spurgeon)

2. (46-48) *A plea for speedy rescue.*

How long, LORD?

Will You hide Yourself forever?

Will Your wrath burn like fire?

Remember how short my time is;

For what futility have You created all the children of men?

What man can live and not see death?

Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?

Selah

a. **How long, LORD?** Ethan couldn't bear the idea that the crisis would last much longer. He poured out his plea to God, who seemed to be hiding and angry with Israel and her king.

b. **Remember how short my time is:** Perhaps Ethan prayed this on behalf of the weary king, or perhaps he longed to see the king and kingdom vindicated in his life,

perhaps in his old age. The mention of shortness of time and the **futility** of life add a sense of urgency and even desperation to the request.

c. **Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?** The answer to this rhetorical question is of course, *no*. No mere man can deliver **his** own life from the grave and its power. Men often wish to forget their complete dependence upon God regarding the life to come, but the psalmist urged us to remember it often, emphasizing it with **Selah**.

i. There has only been One with the power to **deliver his life from the power of the grave** – Jesus Christ. Jesus promised to raise his own body after three days in the grave (Joh 2:19).

ii. “All men at their best estate are mortal and miserable, kings and people must unavoidably die by the condition of their natures; and therefore, Lord, do not increase our affliction, which of itself is more than enough.” (Poole)

iii. “The problems of verses 47f. cry out for the gospel’s answer.” (Kidner)

3. (49-51) *A prayer for restoration of previous mercies.*

**Lord, where are Your former lovingkindnesses,
Which You swore to David in Your truth?
Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants—
How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many
peoples,
With which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD,
With which they have reproached the footsteps of
Your anointed.**

a. **Lord, where are Your former lovingkindnesses?**
Ethan again made honest, heartfelt inquiry from a season of crisis. The request shows that he would not

allow himself to stay in the belief that God had cast them off or renounced His covenant. He could still appeal to God on the basis of what God promised to David, what He **swore to David in His truth**.

b. **Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants:** Ethan asked God to notice their low and despised state, and to act mercifully in light of the seeming triumph of God's own **enemies**, who were also enemies of God's **anointed** king.

i. **They have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed:** "Finally, the prayer...begins to accustom our eyes to the combination of *servant* (Psa 89:50) and Messiah (*anointed*, Psa 89:51), the recipient of God's promises and man's *insults*." (Kidner)

4. (52) *A conclusion of praise.*

Blessed be the LORD forevermore!
Amen and Amen.

a. **Blessed be the LORD forevermore:** The psalmist concludes this song with a hard-fought declaration of praise. This came from a man who knew God's promises and trusted them, all the while honestly pouring out his pain before God in his present distress.

i. "He ends where he began; he has sailed round the world and reached port again. Let us bless God before we pray, and while we pray, and when we have done praying, for he always deserves it of us. If we cannot understand him, we will not distrust him." (Spurgeon)

b. **Amen and Amen:** Ethan the Ezrahite invited the people of God to join him in his confident, hard-fought declaration of praise.

i. This particular ending makes many think that Psa 89:52 was added as an exclamation at the end of

Book Three of Psalms. "This is the doxology with which the third Book of Psalms ends." (Morgan)

ii. "This doxology belongs alike to all the Psalms of the Third Book, and ought not to be treated as if it were merely the last verse of the Psalm to which it adjoins." (Binnie, cited in Spurgeon)

From Everlasting to Everlasting

Psa 90:1 O Lord, you have always been our home.

Psa 90:2 Before you created the hills or brought the world into being, you were eternally God, and will be God forever.

Psa 90:3 You tell us to return to what we were; you change us back to dust.

Psa 90:4 A thousand years to you are like one day; they are like yesterday, already gone, like a short hour in the night.

Psa 90:5 You carry us away like a flood; we last no longer than a dream. We are like weeds that sprout in the morning,

Psa 90:6 that grow and burst into bloom, then dry up and die in the evening.

Psa 90:7 We are destroyed by your anger; we are terrified by your fury.

Psa 90:8 You place our sins before you, our secret sins where you can see them.

Psa 90:9 Our life is cut short by your anger; it fades away like a whisper.

Psa 90:10 Seventy years is all we have—eighty years, if we are strong; yet all they bring us is trouble and sorrow; life is soon over, and we are gone.

Psa 90:11 Who has felt the full power of your anger? Who knows what fear your fury can bring?

Psa 90:12 Teach us how short our life is, so that we may become wise.

Psa 90:13 How much longer will your anger last? Have pity, O LORD, on your servants!

Psa 90:14 Fill us each morning with your constant love, so that we may sing and be glad all our life.

Psa 90:15 Give us now as much happiness as the sadness you gave us during all our years of misery.

Psa 90:16 Let us, your servants, see your mighty deeds; let our descendants see your glorious might.

Psa 90:17 Lord our God, may your blessings be with us. Give us success in all we do!

Psalms 90:1-17

Psalms 90 – The Prayer of Moses in the Wilderness

*This psalm is titled **A Prayer of Moses the man of God**. Some commentators think this was not the same famous and familiar Moses, but the evidence is much stronger for believing that this was indeed the great leader of Israel. This is the only song of Moses in the psalms, but there are two other songs in the Pentateuch (Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32), as well as the blessing of the tribes of Israel in Deuteronomy 33.*

If we connect it with any particular time in the life of Moses, the best suggestion is the time described in Numbers 20. "The historical setting is probably best understood by the incidents recorded in Numbers 20 : (1) the death of Miriam, Moses' sister; (2) the sin of Moses in striking the rock in the wilderness, which kept him from entering the Promised Land; and (3) the death of Aaron, Moses' brother." (James Montgomery Boice)

*Charles Spurgeon wrote of the phrase, **The man of God**: "Moses was peculiarly a man of God and God's man; chosen of God, inspired of God, honoured of God, and faithful to*

God in all his house, he well deserved the name which is here given him."

A. Finding refuge in the eternal God.

1. (1) Yahweh the refuge and protection of His people.

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

a. **Lord, You have been our dwelling place:** This *prayer of Moses* was almost certainly written during the wilderness years on the way to Canaan. In all those years Israel lived in constant need of refuge, shelter, and protection. More than their tents and their armies, Israel had God as their **dwelling place**, their refuge and their protection.

i. **Lord:** The psalm "begins with this great affirmation concerning the relation of man to God. Addressing Him, not as Elohim the Mighty One, nor as Jehovah, the Helper, but as Adonai, the Sovereign Lord, the singer declares that He has been the dwelling-place, the habitation, the home of man in all generations." (Morgan)

ii. **Our dwelling place:** "The Hebrew word for 'dwelling place' may also be translated 'refuge,' which is how it appears in Deu 33:27, one of the other songs of Moses." (Boice)

b. **Our dwelling place in all generations:** Moses understood that Yahweh's help to His people did not begin with the exodus from Egypt. From their pilgrim beginnings under their patriarch Abraham to the days of Moses, God had been their **dwelling place**, their refuge and protection.

i. It isn't a good thing to refer to anyone as *homeless*. Spiritually speaking, that never needs to be the state of the believer. We have our home in Him, and home

should be a place where we rest, where we can be ourselves, where love and happiness dominate. All this should mark our relationship with God.

ii. "In this Eternal One there is a safe abode for the successive generations of men. If God himself were of yesterday, he would not be a suitable refuge for mortal men; if he could change and cease to be God he would be but an uncertain dwelling-place for his people." (Spurgeon)

iii. "He that dwelleth in God cannot be unhoused, because God is stronger than all; neither can any one take another out of his hands, Joh 10:29. Here, then, it is best for us..to seek a supply of all our wants in God alone." (Trapp)

2. (2) The eternal origin of Yahweh.

**Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.**

a. **Before the mountains were brought forth:** In the wilderness on the slow route to Canaan, Moses saw **mountains** on the horizon and reflected on the truth that God existed before those **mountains**. It was God who **formed the earth and the world**.

b. **Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God:** Before anything existed, God was. From eternity past through eternity future (**everlasting to everlasting**), He exists, independent of all His creation.

i. "This is the highest description of the *eternity* of God to which human language can reach." (Clarke)

ii. "The Psalmist, about to describe man's fleeting and transitory state, first directs us to contemplate the unchangeable nature and attributes of God." (Horne)

3. (3) *The judgment of the eternal God.*

**You turn man to destruction,
And say, "Return, O children of men."**

a. **You turn man to destruction:** Moses had seen the judgment of God **turn man to destruction**. He saw it with wicked Egypt and disobedient Israel. The eternal God who created all things was and is a God to be appropriately feared and respected by man. God takes interest in the affairs of men and exercises His holy judgment.

b. **Return, O children of men:** This was not a call to repentance; it was a command of man to return to the dust from which he came, an echo of Gen 3:19 : *For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.*

i. "Although *dust* is a different word from that of Gen 3:19 ('you are dust, and to dust you shall return'), the idea of returning to it (*Turn back*) almost certainly alludes to the curse of Adam, and uses the same verb." (Kidner)

ii. "If we had no Scripture at all to prove this, daily experience before our eyes makes it clear how all men, even the wisest, the strongest, the greatest and the mightiest monarchs and princes in the world, be but miserable men, made of red earth, and quickly turn again to dust." (Smith, cited in Spurgeon)

B. Man before the God of judgment.

1. (4-6) *God's perception of time and our perception of time.*

**For a thousand years in Your sight
Are like yesterday when it is past,
And *like* a watch in the night.
You carry them away *like* a flood;
They are like a sleep.**

**In the morning they are like grass *which* grows up:
In the morning it flourishes and grows up;
In the evening it is cut down and withers.**

a. **For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past:** Having introduced the idea of God's eternal being, living outside of time with no beginning or end, Moses poetically repeated the idea. For the eternal God, a **thousand years** seems like a single day, and a single day in the **past**, not the present.

i. "He is raised above Time, and none of the terms in which men describe duration have any meaning for Him. A thousand years, which to a man seem so long, are to Him dwindled to nothing, in comparison with the eternity of His being. As Peter has said, the converse must also be true, and 'one day be with the Lord as a thousand years.'" (Maclaren)

b. **You carry them away like a flood:** From God's eternal perspective, the days and the years and each millennium pass quickly. For Moses and Israel in the wilderness, time seemed to pass slowly, but Moses knew this was not God's perspective. From God's perspective, a thousand years passes quickly **like a sleep**.

c. **Like grass which grows up:** Moses used many poetic pictures to describe God and time. In God's sight a thousand years was like yesterday, like a watch in the night, like a flood, like a night of sleep. He added this picture: a thousand years is like grass which **grows up** in the **morning** and in **the evening it is cut down and withers**. God's perspective of time's passing is very different from ours.

2. (7-8) God's judgment on their open and secret sins.

**For we have been consumed by Your anger,
And by Your wrath we are terrified.**

**You have set our iniquities before You,
Our secret *sins* in the light of Your countenance.**

a. **For we have been consumed by Your anger:** In the first section of this psalm, Moses connected the idea of God's eternal nature with His judgment upon man. In this section the two ideas are repeated. The God who stands over time and sees a thousand years as yesterday certainly has the right and the authority to judge mankind, especially His own people.

i. In the wilderness Moses and the people of Israel felt **consumed** by God's anger and **terrified** by His **wrath**. It must have been crushing for Moses to see a whole generation melt away in the wilderness, dying away under the judgment of God.

ii. "This was specially the case in reference to the people in the wilderness, whose lives were cut short by justice on account of their waywardness; they failed, not by a natural decline, but through the blast of the well-deserved judgments of God." (Spurgeon)

iii. "**Consumed**; either naturally, by the frame of our bodies; or violently, by extraordinary judgments. Thou dost not suffer us to live so long as we might by the course of nature." (Poole)

b. **You have set our iniquities before You:** The judgment of God came against His people because of their **iniquities**. When the eternal, holy God saw and considered them, His response was **anger** and **wrath**. Moses understood that God's anger against His people was not unreasonable or unearned.

i. "We do not understand the full blessedness of believing that God is our asylum, till we understand that He is our asylum from all that is destructive...nor do we know the significance of the universal

experience of decay and death, till we learn that it is not the result of our finite being, but of sin.” (Maclaren)

c. **Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance:**

It was not only their obvious **iniquities** but also their **secret sins** that God saw. Such sins were not **secret** before God and His judgment.

3. (9-11) *Man’s frailty understood against the eternity of God.*

**For all our days have passed away in Your wrath;
We finish our years like a sigh.
The days of our lives are seventy years;
And if by reason of strength they are eighty years,
Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
Who knows the power of Your anger?
For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.**

a. **All our days have passed away in Your wrath:**

With poetic power, Moses compared the eternal nature of the holy God with the frail, temporary nature of sinful man. God stands forever, but long days **have passed away in Your wrath** and **we finish our years like a sigh**.

i. “It was toward the close of the desert wanderings that Moses wrote this sublime psalm, all the imagery of which is borrowed from the wilderness. The watch around the campfire at night; the rush of the mountain flood; the grass that sprouts so quickly after the rain, and is as quickly scorched; the sigh of the wearied pilgrim.” (Meyer)

b. **The days of our lives are seventy years:** Moses lived 120 years according to Deu 31:2; Deu 34:7. He did not say **seventy years** as either a promise or a limit,

but as a poetic estimate of a lifespan. The emphasis is on the futility of life; even if one should live past the norm of **seventy years** and live **eighty years**, the end of it all is **only labor and sorrow**.

i. **Seventy years**: "Which time the ancient heathen writers also fixed as the usual space of men's lives."
(Poole)

c. **For it is soon cut off, and we fly away**: Moses described the short and often futile sense of this life. The deep cry of Moses seems to anticipate important themes in Ecclesiastes.

d. **Who knows the power of Your anger?** Moses connected the ideas of a relatively short and frustrating life to the fact of God's righteous judgment. Moses especially saw and lived this in the wilderness.

i. "Moses saw men dying all around him; he lived among funerals, and was overwhelmed at the terrible results of the divine displeasure. He felt that none could measure the might of the Lord's wrath."
(Spurgeon)

C. A prayer in light of who God is and how He deals with man.

1. (12) *Praying for wisdom.*

**So teach us to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.**

a. **So teach us to number our days**: When Moses considered the frail nature of humanity and the righteous judgment of God, it made him ask God for the wisdom to understand the shortness of life.

i. "*To number our days*; to consider the shortness and miseries of this life, and the certainty and speediness

of death, and the causes and consequences thereof.”
(Poole)

ii. “Of all arithmetical rules this is the hardest – to *number our days*. Men can number their herds and droves of oxen and of sheep, they can estimate the revenues of their manors and farms, they can with a little pains number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable and therefore do never begin to number them.” (Tymme, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. “To live with dying thoughts is the way to die with living comforts.” (Trapp)

iv. **So teach us** means that this wisdom must be *learned*. It isn’t automatic. Most people live with little awareness that life is short, and their **days** should be **numbered**. Young people especially often think their days have no number and give little thought to what lies beyond this life.

b. **That we may gain a heart of wisdom:** Learning to **number our days** will give us **a heart of wisdom**. This is wisdom not only for the mind, but for the **heart** as well.

i. “Let us deeply consider our own frailty, and the shortness and uncertainty of life, that we may live for eternity, acquaint ourselves with thee, and be at peace; that we may die in thy favour and live and reign with thee eternally.” (Clarke)

2. (13-17) *Praying for mercy and blessing.*

Return, O LORD!

How long?

And have compassion on Your servants.

Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy,

That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!

**Make us glad according to the days *in which* You have afflicted us,
The years *in which* we have seen evil.
Let Your work appear to Your servants,
And Your glory to their children.
And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands.**

a. **Return, O LORD:** This psalm of Moses carefully considered the judgment of God, and yet his prayerful response to that consideration was a plea to God for His presence, for His **compassion**, and for His **mercy** – the *hesed* of Yahweh, His loyal covenant love.

i. In verse 3 God spoke to mankind in judgment, telling him to *return* to destruction (or, to dust). Now, in prayer, Moses asked God to **return**. It was as if Moses said to God's people, "If you continue in sin, you will return to the dust; your only hope is for God to **return** to you."

b. **How long?** This was a meaningful question. Moses asked God not to delay in bringing His presence, **compassion**, and **mercy** to His people. It was a bold question, as if accusing God of being late in His help.

i. "When men are under chastisement they are allowed to...ask 'how long?' Our fault in these times is not too great boldness with God, but too much backwardness in pleading with him." (Spurgeon)

c. **Satisfy us early with Your mercy:** Moses understood that true satisfaction was not rooted in money, fame, romance, pleasure, or success. It was satisfied with God's **mercy**, His faithful, covenant goodness to His people.

i. "Alexander Maclaren said, 'The only thing that will secure life-long gladness is a heart satisfied with the experience of God's love.' This means that nothing will satisfy the human heart ultimately except God." (Boice)

ii. This **mercy** should be sought **early**. "There is no hour like that of morning prime for fellowship with God. If we would dare to wait before Him for satisfaction *then*, the filling of that hour would overflow into all other hours." (Meyer)

iii. "The renewal of his love is associated with "the morning" (cf. Psa 30:5; Psa 49:14; Psa 143:8; Lam 3:23), as the light of day is contrastive with the darkness (gloom) of the night. Thus the psalmist prays for a new beginning, which the Lord alone can open up for his people." (VanGemenen)

d. Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us: Many were the days of their affliction; Moses asked that the days of their gladness would also be many. He hoped the days of gladness would be so long that God's **glory** would be evident even **to their children**.

i. "The New Testament, incidentally, will outrun verse 15's modest prayer for joys to balance sorrows, by its promise of 'an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison' (2Co 4:17)." (Kidner)

ii. "The time of our pilgrimage upon earth is a time of sorrow; we grieve for our departed friends and our surviving friends must soon grieve for us; these are days wherein God afflicteth us." (Horne)

iii. "Lord, if we must die in this desert, if this whole generation (except Caleb and Joshua) must pass away in the wilderness, then, at any rate, give us the

fullness of Thy favor now, that we may spend all our remaining days, whether they be too few or many, in gladness and rejoicing." (Spurgeon)

iv. **According to the days:** "The good Lord measures out the dark and the light in due proportions, and the result is life sad enough to be safe, and glad enough to be desirable." (Spurgeon)

e. **Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us:** Earlier in this psalm Moses spoke of God's people being *consumed* and *terrified*. He prayed that the gracious God would exchange that misery for His own **beauty**.

i. The **beauty of the LORD our God** is great beauty. It is impossible to think of a higher level of beauty or goodness.

ii. **The beauty of the LORD:** "His favourable countenance, and gracious influence, and glorious presence." (Poole)

iii. "The faithful beseech God to let his 'beauty,' his splendor, the light of his countenance, his grace and favour, be upon them." (Horne)

f. **And establish the work of our hands for us:** The final aspect of blessing Moses prayed for was for the permanence of the **work** of God's people. Without this blessing in our lives, our work and its effectiveness pass quickly and are of little impact.

i. Essentially, Moses asked that God would work with man. "Fleeting as our days are, they are ennobled by our being permitted to be God's tools." (Maclaren)

ii. "Good men are anxious not to work in vain. They know that without the Lord they can do nothing, and therefore they cry to him for help in the work, for acceptance of their efforts, and for the establishment of their designs." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Satisfaction, gladness, success in work must all come from the right relation of man in his frailty to the eternal Lord." (Morgan)

My Refuge and My Fortress

Psa 91:1 Whoever goes to the LORD for safety, whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty,

Psa 91:2 can say to him, "You are my defender and protector. You are my God; in you I trust."

Psa 91:3 He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers and from all deadly diseases.

Psa 91:4 He will cover you with his wings; you will be safe in his care; his faithfulness will protect and defend you.

Psa 91:5 You need not fear any dangers at night or sudden attacks during the day

Psa 91:6 or the plagues that strike in the dark or the evils that kill in daylight.

Psa 91:7 A thousand may fall dead beside you, ten thousand all around you, but you will not be harmed.

Psa 91:8 You will look and see how the wicked are punished.

Psa 91:9 You have made the LORD your defender, the Most High your protector,

Psa 91:10 and so no disaster will strike you, no violence will come near your home.

Psa 91:11 God will put his angels in charge of you to protect you wherever you go.

Psa 91:12 They will hold you up with their hands to keep you from hurting your feet on the stones.

Psa 91:13 You will trample down lions and snakes, fierce lions and poisonous snakes.

Psa 91:14 God says, "I will save those who love me and will protect those who acknowledge me as LORD.

Psa 91:15 When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them. I will rescue them and honor them.

Psa 91:16 I will reward them with long life; I will save them."

Psalms 91:1-16

Psalms 91 – The Assurance Given to those Who Trust in God

This psalm has no title, and therefore the author remains unknown. Because it shares some of the themes of Psalms 90, some think Moses was the author. Because it shares some of the themes and phrases of Psalms 27, 31, some think the author was David. "Some of its language, of strongholds and shields, reminds us of David, to whom the Septuagint ascribes it; other phrases echo the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, as did Psalms 90; but it is in fact anonymous and timeless, perhaps all the more accessible for that." (Derek Kidner)

Many have noted the wonderful character of this psalm: "This psalm is one of the greatest possessions of the saints." (G. Campbell Morgan)

"In the whole collection there is not a more cheering Psalm, its tone is elevated and sustained throughout, faith is at its best, and speaks nobly." (Charles Spurgeon)

"It is one of the most excellent works of this kind which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine anything more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented." (de Muis, cited in Spurgeon)

A. The assurance of God's protection.

1. (1-2) *The protection, comfort, and care of Yahweh.*

**He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my
fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."**

a. **He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High:** God has a **secret place** for His own (Psa 27:5; Psa 31:20), and it is a place to *live in*. Those who dwell there **abide under the shadow of the Almighty**, knowing His protection, comfort, and care.

i. In Psa 90:1, Moses spoke of God as the dwelling place of His people. The opening lines of Psalms 91 seem to take that idea further. "Moses spoke of God as the dwelling-place, the habitation, the home of man. This singer seems to accept that great idea, and then to speak of the most central chamber of the dwelling-place, referring to it as the Secret Place, and describing its complete security." (Morgan)

ii. There are many followers of Jesus Christ who seem to know very little of **the secret place of the Most High** or what it is to **abide under His shadow**. Many seem to regard this as only a thing for mystics or the super-spiritual. Yet David, if he wrote this, was a warrior and man well acquainted with the realities of life. It is true that the life of the spirit seems to come more easily for some than for others, but there is an aspect of **the secret place of the Most High** that is for everyone who puts his trust in Him.

iii. "Every child of God looks towards the inner sanctuary and the mercy-seat, yet all do not *dwell* in the most holy place; they run to it at times, and enjoy occasional approaches, but they do not habitually reside in the mysterious presence." (Spurgeon)

iv. **The shadow of the Almighty:** "This is an expression which implies great nearness. We must walk very close to a companion, if we would have his shadow fall on us." (Duncan, cited in Spurgeon)

v. Spurgeon (borrowing from Frances Ridley Havergal) suggested four ways the Scripture speaks of **the shadow of the Almighty**.

- The shadow of the rock (Isa 32:2).
- The shadow of the tree (Son 2:3).
- The shadow of His wings (Psa 63:7).
- The shadow of His hand (Isa 49:2).

vi. These first two verses of Psalms 91 use four wonderful titles or names for God:

- **Most High:** *Elyon*.
- **Almighty:** *Shadday*.
- **The LORD:** *Yahweh*.
- **My God:** *Elohay*.

b. **He is my refuge and my fortress:** The one who lives intimately with God knows the greatness of His protection. God Himself becomes like a mighty **refuge** and **fortress** for the believer.

i. **My refuge:** "Have you ever said definitely, 'O Lord, thou art my refuge'? Fleeing from all other, have you sheltered in Him from the windy storm and tempest, from the harrow by day, and pestilence by night, from man and devil? You must avow it. Do not only think it, but say it." (Meyer)

c. **My God, in Him I will trust:** This close relationship with God and all the benefits that come from it are for those who know Yahweh as **God**, and who truly **trust** in Him. As a believer receives His protection, comfort, and

care, he trusts God all the more, and increasingly knows Him as **God**.

i. "Men are apt enough to proclaim their doubts, and even to boast of them, indeed there is a party nowadays of the most audacious pretenders to culture and thought, who glory in casting suspicion upon everything; hence it becomes the duty of all true believers to speak out and testify with calm courage to their own well-grounded reliance upon their God." (Spurgeon)

ii. Spurgeon suggested many different Biblical examples of people who had their own expression of the phrase **My God**.

- *My God* is the young convert's confession (Ruth, as in Rth 1:16).
- *My God* is the individual Christian's belief (Thomas, as in Joh 20:28).
- *My God* is the declaration of the believer when opposed (Micaiah, as in 1Ki 22:14).
- *My God* is the secret vow of the believer in consecration (Jacob, as in Gen 32:28-30).
- *My God* is the deepest comfort to God's children in great woe (Jesus, as in Mat 27:46).
- *My God* is the celebration for the victorious believer (Miriam, as in Exo 15:21).

2. (3-4) *How God brings His protection, comfort, and care.*

Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler

And from the perilous pestilence.

He shall cover you with His feathers,

And under His wings you shall take refuge;

His truth *shall be your* shield and buckler.

a. **Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler:** Following the general statement of the first two verses, now the psalmist describes the specific ways God protects and cares for His people – beginning with rescue from those who would trap God’s people as the **fowler** snares birds.

i. These are “...metaphors for the plots which would entangle our affairs (Psa 140:1-5) or compromise our loyalty (Psa 119:110).” (Kidner)

ii. “We are foolish and weak as poor little birds, and are very apt to be lured to our destruction by cunning foes, but if we dwell near to God, he will see to it that the most skilful deceiver shall not entrap us.” (Spurgeon)

iii. The devil and his agents often work as **the fowler** works.

- The fowler works in secret.
- The fowler changes his trap and methods.
- The fowler often entices with pleasure or profit.
- The fowler often uses a bad example, a decoy.

iv. “The most striking feature of this section (and the one following) is the use of the singular *you* throughout, which is a way of saying that these truths are for each person individually. They are for you if you will truly trust or abide in God.” (Boice)

b. **And from the perilous pestilence:** God also protects His people in times of plague and disease. The psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, did not intend this as an absolute promise, that every believer would be delivered from every **snare** or every **pestilence**. Instead, the idea is that the psalmist could point to many times when God did just that for His trusting people.

i. "This does not mean that those who trust God never die from infectious diseases or suffer from an enemy's plot, of course. It means that those who trust God are habitually delivered from such dangers. What Christian cannot testify to many such deliverances?" (Boice)

ii. "Lord Craven, a Christian, was a nobleman who was living in London when plague ravaged the city in the fifteenth century. In order to escape the spreading pestilence Craven determined to leave the city for his country home, as many of his social standing did. He ordered his coach and baggage made ready. But as he was walking down one of the halls of his home about to enter his carriage, he overheard one of his servants say to another, 'I suppose by my lord's quitting London to avoid the plague that his God lives in the country and not in town.' It was a straightforward and apparently innocent remark. But it struck Lord Craven so deeply that he canceled his journey, saying, 'My God lives everywhere and can preserve me in town as well as in the country. I will stay where I am.' So he stayed in London. He helped the plague victims, and he did not catch the disease himself." (Boice)

iii. There is also a spiritual understanding and application of this. "The soul hath likewise her enemies, ready to attack and surprise her at all hours." (Horne)

iv. "Children of God are not always immune from physical plague and pestilence; but they are ever guarded from destructive spiritual forces as they dwell in the secret place of the Most High." (Morgan)

c. **He shall cover you with His feathers:** In a metaphor, God is represented as a bird, sheltering young

chicks **under His wings** – as David previously described in Psa 61:4.

i. “The mother eagle, spreading her...wing over her eaglets, is a wonderful symbol of the union of power and gentleness.” (Maclaren)

ii. “Saith Luther; it is faith which maketh thee the little chicken, and Christ the hen; that thou mayest hide, and hope, and hover, and cover under his wings; for there is health in his wings.” (Trapp)

iii. Boice connected Mat 23:37 to verse 4: “Jesus would have saved and sheltered Jerusalem and its inhabitants, but the people were not willing. They would not come to him. They would not ‘dwell’ in the shelter of the Most High. They cried out for his crucifixion instead.” (Boice)

d. **His truth shall be your shield and buckler:** The pictures of God’s protection continue with **His truth** represented as the smaller, often round **shield** and the larger, often rectangular shield, the **buckler**.

i. “As for God’s care, it combines the warm protectiveness of a parent bird with the hard, unyielding strength of armour.” (Kidner)

ii. **Shield and buckler:** “Double armour has he who relies upon the Lord. He bears a shield and wears an all-surrounding coat of mail.” (Spurgeon)

iii. Boice on **buckler**: “The Hebrew word signifies something that is wrapped around a person for his or her protection; hence, it can mean ‘buckler,’ ‘armor,’ or, as in the New International Version, a ‘rampart’ or fortress.”

3. (5-6) *The result of God’s protection and care.*

**You shall not be afraid of the terror by night,
Nor of the arrow *that* flies by day,
Nor of the pestilence *that* walks in darkness,
Nor of the destruction *that* lays waste at noonday.**

a. **You shall not be afraid:** Having God as a shelter and refuge gives strength and courage to the people of God. When God's people are stuck deep in fear, it is an indication that they fall short of proper trust in God as protector and comforter.

i. "Not to be afraid is in itself an unspeakable blessing, since for every suffering which we endure from real injury we are tormented by a thousand griefs which arise from fear only." (Spurgeon)

ii. "In life the Lord may permit many terrible things to happen to his children (cf. Job), as he did to his own Son, our Lord. But his children know that no power is out of God's control." (VanGemeren)

b. **Of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day:** The psalmist represented all kinds of destruction that could come in all kinds of circumstances. It could come **by night** or **by day**, **in darkness** or **at noonday**. It could come as **terror** or by **arrow**, as a **pestilence** or as **destruction**. Whenever or however it comes, God is able to defend His people.

i. "The assaults of enemies and the devastations of pestilence are taken in Psa 91:5-6 as types of all perils." (Maclaren)

4. (7-8) *Assurance for the believer.*

**A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you.
Only with your eyes shall you look,
And see the reward of the wicked.**

a. **A thousand may fall at your side:** The psalmist described how God's protection could conquer any odds or probabilities. God's protection and care could be so specifically focused that it can preserve one in **ten thousand**.

i. "It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord; the most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honour, death is his gain. No evil in the strict sense of the word can happen to him, for everything is overruled for good." (Spurgeon)

b. **See the reward of the wicked:** In contrast to the protection of His chosen, God has also appointed a **reward** for the **wicked**. God's people are encouraged to **look** at this truth and carefully consider it.

B. The assurance repeated twice over.

1. (9-13) Repeating the promise of deliverance and assurance of victory.

**Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,
No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.
In *their* hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.**

a. **Because you have made the LORD...your dwelling place:** The principles and promises in verses

10 through 16 are directed toward those who trust in the LORD, making Him their **dwelling place** – their source of life and satisfaction.

b. **No evil shall befall you:** The previous promises (verses 5-8) of security and safety even in a time of **plague** are repeated. Again, this is not regarded as an absolute promise for every believer in every circumstance, because beloved people of God *have* fallen to evil or died in plague. It is the happy expectation of the psalmist and a general expression of God's protection, comfort, and care for His people.

i. "Martin Luther wrote that this refers to 'one who really dwells and does not merely appear to dwell and does not just imagine that he dwells' in God." (Boice)

ii. "This and such-like promises are not to be understood absolutely and universally, as if no truly good man could be cut off by the plague or other common calamities, which is confimed both by other plain texts of Scripture, and by unquestionable experience." (Poole)

iii. "For it may befall a saint to share in a common calamity; as the good corn and weeds are cut down together, but for a different end and purpose." (Trapp)

iv. "God doth not say no afflictions shall befall us, but no evil." (Watson, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling:**

Charles Spurgeon gave remarkable testimony to a specific fulfillment of this promise:

i. "In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighbourhood in which I laboured was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after

family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardour to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest; I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words: *'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'* The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvellous power I adore the Lord my God." (Spurgeon)

d. **For He shall give His angels charge over you:**

This describes another way God may send His protection and care unto His people – through **His angels**, commanding them to **keep** and **bear...up** His people.

i. "The *angels of God* shall have an especial charge to accompany, defend, and preserve thee; and against

their power, the influence of evil spirits cannot prevail. These will, when necessary, turn thy steps out of the way of danger; ward it off when it comes in thy ordinary path." (Clarke)

ii. "Charge; charge is a strict command, more than a bare command; as when you would have a servant do a business certainly and fully, you lay a charge upon him, I charge you that you do not neglect that business; you do not barely tell what he should do, prescribe him his work, but you charge him to do it. So says the Lord unto the angels." (Bridge, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "Not one guardian angel, as some fondly dream, but all the angels are here alluded to.... They have received commission from their Lord and ours to watch carefully over all the interests of the faithful." (Spurgeon)

iv. "How angels thus keep us we cannot tell. Whether they repel demons, counteract spiritual plots, or even ward off the subtler physical forces of disease, we do not know. Perhaps we shall one day stand amazed at the multiplied services which the unseen bands have rendered to us." (Spurgeon)

v. "Let us remember that it is GOD, whose these angels are; HE gives them charge – from HIM they receive their commission – to HIM they are responsible for their charge. From God thou art to expect them; and for their help he alone is to receive the praise. It is expressly said, *He shall give his angels charge*; to show that they are not to be *prayed to* nor *praised*; but GOD *alone*, whose *servants* they are." (Clarke)

e. For He shall give His angels charge over you: The promise in verses 11 and 12 was quoted and twisted by

Satan in His temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Mat 4:5-7, Luk 4:9-12). Satan tempted Jesus to create an artificial crisis by throwing Himself from a high point on the temple mount, and Satan quoted Psa 91:11-12 as a promise of protection if Jesus were to do this.

i. As Matthew 4 records, Satan's quotation of Psalm verses 11 and 12 is a pattern of how he twists the word of God.

- Verses 11 and 12 were *falsely quoted*, because the devil left out the words **to keep you in all your ways**. To test God in this way was *not* Jesus' way; it was not the way of the Savior. "God had never promised, nor ever given, any protection of angels in sinful and forbidden ways." (Poole on Matthew 4)

- This text is *wrongly applied*, because it was not used to teach or encourage, but intended instead to deceive: "...making this word a promise to be fulfilled upon Christ's neglect of his duty; extending the promise of special providence as to dangers into which men voluntarily throw themselves." (Poole on Matthew 4)

ii. In a strange way we are grateful for Satan's attempt in Matthew 4, because it helps us better understand Psalms 91. We see that it does not give absolute promises for every believer in every circumstance, but beautiful promises of God's protection, comfort, and care that are specifically received and applied in the believer by the Holy Spirit.

iii. The angels were there to help Jesus in His temptation, just not in the way the devil suggested (Mat 4:11).

f. **You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra:** The protection of God to His people extends beyond the general deliverance from harm; it also speaks of a general granting of victory to His people, even over opponents as strong as the **young lion** and the **cobra**.

i. These words are "...depicting God's servants not merely as survivors but as victors, who *trample* deadly enemies *under foot*." (Kidner)

ii. There is another interesting connection with the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. "The Lord's trust in his Father also resulted in Satan's defeat, another part of the psalm the devil omitted." (Boice)

2. (14-16) *God's promise to and blessing over the one who loves Him.*

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;

I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;

I *will be* with him in trouble;

I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life I will satisfy him,

And show him My salvation."

a. **Because he has set his love upon Me:** These last three verses are set in the first person as God speaks promise and blessing over His people. He speaks specifically over those who **set** their **love upon** Him. It has been wonderfully noted that the last words of this psalm are not spoken *by* God's people, but *to* God's people.

i. **He has set his love upon Me:** This "...is used elsewhere in contexts of setting one's heart on

somebody or on some enterprise. As man's commitment to God it comes only here." (Kidner)

ii. To **set** one's **love upon** God means to do it by choice. He does not wait for the feeling of love to come, but simply chooses to think and act toward God in ways that express and build love. This would include:

- Spending time with God.
- Listening to God.
- Reading what God has written to us.
- Speaking to God.
- Thinking of God in unoccupied moments.
- Adoring God.
- Speaking of God to others.
- Giving to God and making glad sacrifices to Him and for Him.

iii. Our present culture often thinks of love as something that happens to people, not something chosen. The phrase **because he has set his love on Me** reminds us that a significant aspect of love is indeed a choice, and this describes in part the love we should give unto God.

b. **Therefore I will deliver Him:** The promises and principles stated previously in this psalm are repeated again, but this time from the perspective of God Himself. God will protect His beloved and **set him on high** – and do it **because he has known My name**, having a real relationship with God.

i. **I will set him on high:** "I will place him *out of the reach* of all his enemies. I will *honour* and *ennoble* him, *because he hath known my name* – because he

has loved, honoured, and served me, and rendered me that worship which is my due. He has *known* me to be the God of infinite mercy and love.” (Clarke)

ii. “There are blessings that some believers miss out on, simply because they are always fretting and do not trust God as they should. Here the psalmist quotes God as saying that the blessings are for those who love God and acknowledge his name (verse 14), call upon him (verse 15), and seek satisfaction in what he alone can provide.” (Boice)

c. **He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him:** God promises to answer the prayer of the one who loves Him, and the one who genuinely knows Him.

d. **I will be with him:** In the last lines of the psalm, God spoke personal and wonderful blessings over the one who loves and knows Him:

- The blessing of His presence: **I will be with him in trouble.**
- The blessing of His protection: **I will deliver him.**
- The blessing of His promotion: **I will...honor him.**
- The blessing of His prosperity: **With long life I will satisfy him.**
- The blessing of His preservation: **And show him My salvation.**

i. **I will be with him:** “So, no man need add solitude to sadness, but may have God sitting with him, like Job’s friends, waiting to comfort him with true comfort.” (Maclaren)

ii. **I will be with him in trouble:** “Again God speaks and acts like a tender-hearted mother towards a sickly child. When the child is in perfect health she can leave it in the hands of the nurse; but when it is

sick she will attend it herself; she will say to the nurse, 'You may attend a while to some other business, I will watch over the child myself.'" (Dawson, cited in Spurgeon)

How Great Are Your Works

Psa 92:1 How good it is to give thanks to you, O LORD, to sing in your honor, O Most High God,

Psa 92:2 to proclaim your constant love every morning and your faithfulness every night,

Psa 92:3 with the music of stringed instruments and with melody on the harp.

Psa 92:4 Your mighty deeds, O LORD, make me glad; because of what you have done, I sing for joy.

Psa 92:5 How great are your actions, LORD! How deep are your thoughts!

Psa 92:6 This is something a fool cannot know; someone who is stupid cannot understand:

Psa 92:7 the wicked may grow like weeds, those who do wrong may prosper; yet they will be totally destroyed,

Psa 92:8 because you, LORD, are supreme forever.

Psa 92:9 We know that your enemies will die, and all the wicked will be defeated.

Psa 92:10 You have made me as strong as a wild ox; you have blessed me with happiness.

Psa 92:11 I have seen the defeat of my enemies and heard the cries of the wicked.

Psa 92:12 The righteous will flourish like palm trees; they will grow like the cedars of Lebanon.

Psa 92:13 They are like trees planted in the house of the LORD, that flourish in the Temple of our God,

Psa 92:14 that still bear fruit in old age and are always green and strong.

Psa 92:15 This shows that the LORD is just, that there is no wrong in my protector.

Psalms 92:1-15

Psalms 92 – The Goodness of Giving Thanks to the LORD

*This psalm is titled **A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day.** It is the only psalm so titled and was perhaps a song to be sung and meditated on the Sabbath. Derek Kidner observed: "This Song for the Sabbath is proof enough, if such were needed, that the Old Testament sabbath was a day not only for rest but for corporate worship ('a holy convocation,' Lev 23:3), and intended to be a delight rather than a burden."*

"The Jews have for a long while used this Psalm in the synagogue-worship on their Sabbath, and very suitable it is for the Sabbath-day; not so much in appearance, for there is little or no allusion to any Sabbatic rest in it, but because on that day above all others, our thoughts should be lifted up from all earthly things to God himself." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. Giving thanks.

1. (1-3) The manner of giving thanks.

**It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning,
And Your faithfulness every night,
On an instrument of ten strings,
On the lute,
And on the harp,
With harmonious sound.**

a. **It is good to give thanks to the LORD:** This Sabbath psalm begins with a simple yet profound

statement. It is a **good** thing **to give thanks** to Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel and the Maker of heaven and earth.

- It is good because thanks to our Creator is appropriate.
- It is good because thanks to our Covenant Redeemer is fitting.
- It is good because thanks to the One who blesses and delivers us is right.
- It is good because thanks to the One who is all-good is always good.
- It is good because thanks to God does us benefit.
- It is good because thanks to God sets an example for others to do the same.
- It is good because a mere attitude of thankfulness is not enough.

i. Giving thanks to God is more than *right*; it is also **good**: "...good, no doubt, in the sense that, in love, he values it, as he valued his creation; but also in the sense that it uplifts and liberates us." (Kidner)

ii. "The statement seems an obvious one; no one will be inclined to contradict it. Yet how little we know of this highest function of worship, that of offering the pure sacrifice of praise." (Morgan)

iii. "Go carefully and thoroughly through the ordinary services of our churches, whether the form be liturgical or what we designate free, or extempore, and note how small a part of them is devoted to the giving of thanks." (Morgan)

iv. "The devout heart feels that worship is 'good,' not only as being acceptable to God and conformable to

man's highest duty, but as being the source of delight to the worshipper." (Maclaren)

b. And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High:

Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, repeating an idea with similar words. This is an example of this, with the second phrase repeating the essential idea of the first. Therefore, for the psalmist, to **sing praises** to God's **name** is very much like giving **thanks to the LORD**. Singing is a valid and wonderful expression of gratitude to God.

i. "It is good to give thanks in the form of vocal song. Nature itself teaches us thus to express our gratitude to God; do not the birds sing, and the brooks warble as they flow?" (Spurgeon)

ii. "Our personal experience has confirmed us in the belief that it is good to sing unto the Lord; we have often felt like Luther when he said, 'Come, let us sing a Psalm, and drive away the devil.'" (Spurgeon)

c. To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning:

Proclaiming God's **lovingkindness** (*hesed*, the great word for God's loyal, covenant love) and **faithfulness** is another way to give thanks to the LORD. This declaration is not only to be made on the good days or nights, but **every night**.

i. "The 'mercy' of God in promising salvation, and his 'faithfulness' in accomplishing it, are inexhaustible subjects for 'morning and evening' praises." (Horne)

ii. "Eagerly and promptly should we magnify the Lord; we leave unpleasant tasks as long as we can, but our hearts are so engrossed with the adoration of God that we would rise betimes to attend to it. There is a peculiar freshness and charm about early morning praises; the day is loveliest when it first opens its

eyelids, and God himself seems then to make distribution of the day's manna, which tastes most sweetly if gathered ere the sun is hot." (Spurgeon)

iii. This kind of heartfelt praise gives honor to God. "We talk as if, really, we were to be pitied for living, as if we were little better off than toads under a hallow, or snails in a tub of salt. We whine as if our lives were martyrdoms, and every breath a woe. But it is not so. Such conduct slanders the good Lord." (Spurgeon)

iv. **Your faithfulness every night:** "We have a day's more experience than we had in the morning; therefore we have more power to sing of God's faithfulness." (Spurgeon)

d. **On an instrument:** Worship and honor to God may be expressed in music, with a variety of instruments. However, it should be done **with harmonious sound**, meaning that those who dedicate their music to serving God and His people should endeavor to be **harmonious** and excellent in their presentation of the music.

i. "I know that there is a tradition in the church that opposes the use of musical instruments in worship, but I do not see how it can stand in the light of these and other Bible passages." (Boice)

ii. The first three verses of this psalm show that worshipping and honoring God have many different aspects and expressions. We should worship God in any available and honoring way.

- It may be thanksgiving, singing, or declaration.
- It may be because of who He is (**the LORD, Most High**) or because of what He has done (expressed in acts of **lovingkindness** and **faithfulness**).
- It may be done at day or night.

- It may be done with singing and with instrumental music.

2. (4) *The reason for giving thanks.*

For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work;

I will triumph in the works of Your hands.

a. **For You, LORD:** The emphasis is on God's personal work. This is what *He Himself* has done.

b. **Have made me glad through Your work:** Sometimes God's servants grumble about His works and ways. The way of the psalmist is far better, to be **made glad** through the **work** of God.

i. "The acts of God are not to be separated from his nature ('love,' 'faithfulness'; cf. v. 2), because his "deeds" are expressive of his nature." (VanGemeren)

c. **I will triumph in the works of Your hands:** The focus is entirely on God, and not on self. The **triumph** is found not in what we do for God, but on what God has done with His own **hands**.

B. God's works for His people and His enemies.

1. (5-6) *God's great thoughts.*

O LORD, how great are Your works!

Your thoughts are very deep.

A senseless man does not know,

Nor does a fool understand this.

a. **How great are Your works:** Having brought up the idea of God's works in the previous lines, the psalmist now declares **how great** those works are.

i. **How great are Your works:** "They are multitudinous, stupendous, and splendid: *and thy thoughts* – thy designs and counsels, *from which, by*

which, and *in reference* to which, they have been formed; *are very deep* – so profound as not to be fathomed by the comprehension of man.” (Clarke)

ii. “The struggles of faith with unbelief...are ended for this singer. He bows in trustful adoration before the greatness of the works and the unsearchable depth of the purpose of God which directs the works.” (Maclaren)

iii. “But how doth the regenerate soul exult and triumph, at beholding that ‘work’ of God’s ‘hand’ whereby he hath created all things anew in Christ Jesus!” (Horne)

b. **Your thoughts are very deep:** First among God’s **works**, the psalmist spoke of the great intelligence of God. God’s knowledge is not only broad, touching absolutely everything; it is also **very deep**, knowing all things about everything.

i. **Your thoughts are very deep:** “Verily, my brethren, there is no sea so deep as these thoughts of God, who maketh the wicked flourish, and the good suffer: nothing so profound, nothing so deep: therein every unbelieving soul is wrecked, in that depth, in that profundity. Dost thou wish to cross this depth? Remove not from the wood of Christ’s cross; and thou shalt not sink: hold thyself fast to Christ.” (Augustine, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **A senseless man does not know:** The **senseless** and the **fool** don’t **understand** that God is infinitely smarter and greater than they are. It’s very hard for some people to accept that God knows more than they do, and it can be even more difficult to really live as if that is true.

i. The **senseless man** doesn't understand the greatness of God as described in verse 5. Nor does he understand the coming judgment (despite present prosperity) described in verse 7.

ii. **A senseless man**: "*Ish baar*, the human hog – the stupid bear – the *boor*; the man who is all flesh; in whom *spirit* or *intellect* neither seems to work nor exist. The *brutish man*, who never attempts to see God in his works." (Clarke)

iii. "The word "senseless" (*baʿar*, v. 6; cf. 49:10; 73:22; Pro 12:1; Pro 30:2) is expressive of animal-like behavior. As an animal shows no perception or analytic ability, so the fool has no common sense (cf. Isa 1:2)." (VanGemeren)

iv. Boice suggested a connection to Psalms 8 : "By calling him 'a little lower than the heavenly beings' rather than 'a little higher than the beasts,' it indicates that it is man's calling to look up to God and become like God, in whose image he is made. But if he will not look up, the only place he will be able to look is down, and he will begin to behave like an animal." (Boice)

2. (7-9) God judges His enemies.

**When the wicked spring up like grass,
And when all the workers of iniquity flourish,
It is that they may be destroyed forever.
But You, LORD, are on high forevermore.
For behold, Your enemies, O LORD,
For behold, Your enemies shall perish;
All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.**

a. **When the wicked spring up like grass**: The psalmist saw many times when

the wicked seemed to prosper. They grew quickly **like grass** and seemed to **flourish**. Yet he also knew that their prosperity was only the prelude to their destruction (**it is that they may be destroyed forever**).

i. **Spring up...flourish**: "The apparent success of the wicked is as a pleasant slope that leads downward. The quicker the blossoming, the sooner the petals fall." (Maclaren)

ii. "The favour of God towards man is not to be known by outward prosperity; nor is his disapprobation to be known by the adverse circumstances in which any person may be found. When, however, we see the wicked flourish, we may take for granted that their *abuse* of God's mercies will cause him to cut them off as cumberers of the ground; and, dying in their sins, *they are destroyed for ever*." (Clarke)

iii. **Destroyed forever**: "Destruction '*for ever*' is a portion far too terrible for the mind to realise. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the full terror of the wrath to come!" (Spurgeon)

iv. "Little do they think that they are suffered to prosper that like *beasts* they may be fitter for slaughter. The fatter they are, the fitter for slaughter, and the sooner slain." (Bogan, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **But You, LORD, are on high forevermore**: In contrast to the wicked who have only temporary prosperity, God is set **on high forevermore**. His **enemies shall perish** and all the wicked **shall be scattered**.

c. **For behold, Your enemies, O LORD**: The phrase is repeated for emphasis. Those **enemies** of the LORD will be destroyed, and God's people are called upon to **behold** this as another of God's great works.

i. "The psalmist, by this demonstrative particle 'lo,' [**behold**] points to it as it were with the finger, as a thing most evident and undoubted." (Trapp)

ii. In the end, God is determined to destroy those who make themselves His **enemies**. "That is a weak and perilous tenderness which permits evil to continue its work of destruction. That is a strong and tender pity which without relenting, smites evil, and destroys it." (Morgan)

iii. Kidner on verse 9: "This verse, with its cumulative force, is noticeably similar to certain lines from Ugarit, written some centuries earlier. If these were well known, the present verse could be a pointed assertion that it is the Lord, not Baal, who will triumph, and that his victory will rid the world of evil, rather than relieve a mere nature-god of his rivals." (Kidner)

3. (10-11) *The psalmist's experience of blessing and deliverance.*

**But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox;
I have been anointed with fresh oil.
My eye also has seen *my desire* on my enemies;
My ears hear *my desire* on the wicked
Who rise up against me.**

a. **My horn You have exalted like a wild ox:** The **horn** was a symbol of strength and might. The wicked are destroyed (verse 7), but the righteous have their strength **exalted**.

i. **A wild ox:** The power and ferocity of this animal was proverbial." (VanGemenen)

ii. "The imagery of 'horn' also evokes the metaphor of 'oil,' as oil was poured from a horn (cf. 1Sa 16:13)."
(VanGemenen)

b. **I have been anointed with fresh oil:** The **anointing with fresh oil** brought refreshment and honor: the blessing and power and enabling of God poured out upon the one **anointed**.

i. **With fresh oil:** "Each morning bend your heads, ye priests of the Most High, for the fresh anointing for the new ministries that await you. The former grace and strength will not suffice; old texts must be rejuvenated and reminted; old vows must be re-spoken; the infilling of the Holy Spirit must be as vivid, and may be as definite, as at the first." (Meyer)

ii. "Sometimes, when we meet with believers who are full of grace, full of patience, full of courage, full of zeal, full of love, we say, 'I can never get where they are.' Yes, we can, for we shall be anointed with fresh oil, and if we obtain fresh grace there is no place of eminence we cannot reach." (Spurgeon)

iii. "*Fresh oil*, in such a context, speaks eloquently of a renewed anointing...or consecration, to serve God. There may be the additional thought of preparing a 'living sacrifice', since the verb is used elsewhere not for anointing but for moistening the meal-offering with oil before presenting it at the altar (Exo 29:40)." (Kidner)

c. **My eye has also seen my desire on my enemies:** The psalmist had the additional blessing of *seeing* his triumph over his enemies. Victory is assured for the people of God (Rom 8:37), but sometimes it is only understood by faith and not seen with the natural eye.

i. "It is intended to express an assurance of faith, a humble confidence in the promises of God, that our efforts shall at length be crowned with victory over every thing which resisteth and opposeth itself; and

that the day is coming, when we shall view all the enemies of our salvation dead at our feet." (Horne)

4. (12-15) *God makes the righteous flourish.*

**The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
Those who are planted in the house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bear fruit in old age;
They shall be fresh and flourishing,
To declare that the LORD is upright;
*He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.***

a. **The righteous shall flourish:** The wicked have their season of flourishing (verse 7), but the righteous **shall flourish** like the ever-green **palm tree**. The wicked should understand that this world provides the best they will ever experience, and the righteous should know that this world provides the worst they will experience.

i. **Like a palm tree:** "When we see a noble palm standing erect, sending all its strength upward in one bold column, and growing amid the dearth and drought of the desert, we have a fine picture of the godly man, who in his uprightness aims alone at the glory of God; and, independent of outward circumstances, is made by divine grace to live and thrive where all things else perish." (Spurgeon)

b. **He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon:** The cedar trees of Lebanon were known for their size, strength, durability, beauty, and usefulness. The blessings to come upon the righteous bring the same attributes.

i. "The *cedar* gives us the idea of *majesty, stability, durableness, and incorruptibility.*" (Clarke)

c. **Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God:** God's house, the place of His presence, is the place where believers are both **planted** and where they continually live and **flourish**. One might say that they are in the presence of the LORD from beginning to end, and they **still bear fruit in old age** – even as Moses did (Deu 34:7).

i. **Planted in the house of the LORD:** "It is questionable whether there are trees planted in the courts of the Temple; but the psalmist's thought is that the righteous will surely be found there, and that it is their native soil, in which rooted, they are permanent." (Maclaren)

ii. **Still bear fruit in old age:** "It is not the greenness of perpetual youth, but the freshness of age without sterility, like that of Moses whose 'eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated' (Deu 34:7); whose wisdom was mature and his memory invaluable rich." (Trapp)

iii. As 2Co 4:16 indicates, it is possible to be outwardly wasting away, yet inwardly renewed day by day. "When their natural strength decayeth, it shall be renewed; their last days shall be their best days, wherein as they shall grow in grace, so they shall increase in comfort and blessedness." (Meyer)

iv. "I once heard a good Christian man say that he was confessing a fault. He said, 'I am afraid that the fruit of my old age is peevishness.' 'No,' I said, 'that is not a fruit of your old age; it is a fruit of your old nature.' But the fruit of old age, where there is grace in old age, should be patience." (Spurgeon)

d. **To declare that the LORD is upright:** This is why the people of God live in a blessed way that gives honor and attention to God (**bear fruit**). It isn't to draw

attention to themselves as wonderful people, but to shout out **that the LORD is upright.**

i. “‘That the Lord is upright.’ Well, how does the fruit-bearing of an aged Christian show that? Why, it shows that God has kept his promise. He has promised that he will never leave them nor forsake them. There you see it. He has promised that when they are weak they shall be strong. There you see it. He has promised that if they seek him they shall not lack any good thing. There you see it.” (Spurgeon)

e. **He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him:** This was the confident, proven experience of the psalmist. He knew from both understanding and life experience that God could be trusted and did all things in goodness.

The Lord Reigns

Psa 93:1 The LORD is king. He is clothed with majesty and strength. The earth is set firmly in place and cannot be moved.

Psa 93:2 Your throne, O LORD, has been firm from the beginning, and you existed before time began.

Psa 93:3 The ocean depths raise their voice, O LORD; they raise their voice and roar.

Psa 93:4 The LORD rules supreme in heaven, greater than the roar of the ocean, more powerful than the waves of the sea.

Psa 93:5 Your laws are eternal, LORD, and your Temple is holy indeed, forever and ever.

Psalms 93:1-5

Psalms 93 – The LORD Reigns

There is no title to this psalm in the Hebrew text. It is a short, bold declaration of God’s might, power, and holiness.

G. Campbell Morgan said of Psalms 93, "Interpretation is almost an impertinence. Let it be done reverently."

"Psalms 93 describes a theocracy, as do the seven psalms that follow it. The words Yahwehmelek ('Jehovah reigns' or 'Jehovah is king') are the watchwords of these theocratic psalms." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. The majesty of God.

1. (1) God's majesty expressed by His raiment.

**The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.**

a. **The LORD reigns:** Psalms 93 begins suddenly and wonderfully with the proclamation of Yahweh's rule. This lifts the covenant God of Israel over every idol and pretender of sovereignty.

i. **The LORD reigns:** "The emphatic position of 'the Lord' in the Masoretic Text leaves no ambiguity in the affirmation that it is Yahweh, and no other deity, who reigns in glory." (VanGemeren)

ii. "There is a decisiveness in the Hebrew for *The Lord reigns* which at least calls for an exclamation mark (as in Today's English Version, 'The Lord is king!'). It has the ring of a proclamation." (Kidner)

iii. "What can give greater joy to a loyal subject than a sight of the king in his beauty? Let us repeat the proclamation, '*the Lord reigneth*,' whispering it in the ears of the desponding, and publishing it in the face of the foe." (Spurgeon)

iv. "This psalm was written in all likelihood after some deliverance Jehovah wrought for His people, but

through the open window the singer, consciously or unconsciously, saw the far distant light of another day in which the Kingdom of God will be set up in His might, and the song of an established order shall be the anthem of His praise." (Morgan)

b. **He is clothed with majesty**: God is adorned with the garments fitting His sovereignty; He is clothed with **majesty** and **strength**. They surround and mark Him like clothing marks the man.

i. **Clothed with majesty**: "He hath now put off his arms [armor], and put on his robes, he will henceforth rule all wisely and righteously." (Trapp)

ii. **With majesty**: "Majesty is a hard idea to define, but it has to do with dignity, authority of sovereign power, stateliness, and grandeur. It is the proper characteristic of earthly monarchs, who have often gone to great lengths to enhance the impression of their majesty by multiplications of trappings of power. But it is supremely the attribute of him who is the Monarch over all and who does not need to multiply the trappings of his power." (Boice)

iii. "Every verse of this song, except the last, reverberates with doubled or even trebled expressions, a powerful feature which it shares with some of the earliest biblical and Canaanite poetry." (Kidner)

c. **Surely the world is established**: God's strength and majesty are not only displayed by His person, but also by what He *does*. In his **strength**, **majesty**, and genius, God has constructed a **world** that is firmly **established** and **cannot be moved** – unless *He* moves it.

2. (2) *God's majesty expressed by His throne.*

**Your throne *is* established from of old;
You *are* from everlasting.**

a. **Your throne is established from of old:** Not only is the world established, but so is the **throne** of God. His reign is without challenge. There are rebels against His reign, but they do not have the slightest chance of success.

i. "Earthly thrones are temporary; they are set up and cast down against, neither is any trust to be reposed in them. But the throne of Christ is eternal and unchangeable. Constituted before the foundation of the world, it is to endure when no traces of such a system having once existed shall any more be found." (Horne)

ii. "And this kingdom of thine is no new or upstart kingdom, as it may seem to the ignorant world, but the most ancient of all kingdoms, being from everlasting to everlasting, although it was not always equally manifested in the world." (Poole)

b. **You are from everlasting:** God's eternal authority extends to His very being. He is eternal in a sense none other is; His life is without a beginning and without an ending. In these and in other ways, God stands majestically above and beyond His creation.

i. "There never was a time in which God did not reign, in which he was not a supreme and absolute Monarch; for he is from *everlasting*. There never was a time in which he was not; there never can be a period in which he shall cease to exist." (Clarke)

B. The might of God.

1. (3-4) His might over creation.

**The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;**

**The floods lift up their waves.
The LORD on high *is* mightier
Than the noise of many waters,
Than the mighty waves of the sea.**

a. **The floods have lifted up, O LORD:** There are strong things that seem to oppose God. A flood of water seems unstoppable and unsparing in its destruction. Like the mighty **waves** of the ocean, the **floods** rise up against God with their **voice**.

i. "The figure of the storm-tossed sea is made use of to indicate the strength of this opposition." (Morgan)

ii. "Observe that the Psalmist turns to the Lord when he sees the billows foam, and hears the breakers roar; he does not waste his breath by talking to the waves, or to violent men." (Spurgeon)

b. **The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters:** As fearsome and powerful as the **mighty waves of the sea** are, they are not higher or stronger than God. He reigns over all that might challenge or oppose, and over the mightiest things of this earth.

i. "The sea with its mighty mass of waters, with the constant unrest of its waves, with its ceaseless pressing against the solid land and foaming against the rocks, is an emblem of the Gentile world alienated from and at enmity with God." (Delitzsch, cited in Boice)

ii. **Mightier than the noise of many waters:** "He defeats tyrants and persecutors, be they never so terrible for noise and number. If he but thunder they are hushed, and glad to wriggle, as worms, into their holes." (Trapp)

iii. "He sits as King, higher than the spray is tossed, deeper than the fathomless depths, mightier than the

strongest billow. Let Him but say, 'Peace, be still!' and the greatest storm that ever swept the waves with wild fury sinks into the tranquil sleep of childhood." (Meyer)

iv. "The danger may exceed thy resistance, but not God's assistance; the enemies' power may surpass thy strength, their subtlety outwit thy prudence, but neither can excel the wisdom and might of God that is with thee." (Wright, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (5) *The might of His holiness.*

**Your testimonies are very sure;
Holiness adorns Your house,
O LORD, forever.**

a. **Your testimonies are very sure:** As in other psalms, **testimonies** is a poetic reference to God's word. The psalmist understood that the might, sovereignty, and strength of God was powerfully expressed in and through His word.

i. **Testimonies** is used more than 20 times in Psalms 119 in reference to God's word. These **testimonies** are connected to previous idea of God's reign in that, "His reign...is revealed in His testimonies – that is, His law, His word to men, is sure." (Morgan)

ii. "As in providence the throne of God is fixed beyond all risk, so in revelation his truth is beyond all question. Other teachings are uncertain, but the revelations of heaven are infallible." (Spurgeon)

b. **Holiness adorns Your house:** This mighty God is *holy*, different from any man or woman. His power is holy power and His sovereignty is a holy sovereignty. His **holiness** is connected to all He is and does, and could be said to adorn His very **house**. This is true both for the

representation of His **house** on earth (the temple under the Old Covenant) and His ultimate **house** in heaven.

i. If taken as an exhortation to God's people to display holiness as His inheritance, His **house**, this idea has parallels in the New Testament:

- *If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (1Co 3:17).*

- *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Pe 2:9).*

ii. "If we are not holy, how can we adorn the house of God? We cannot! We do the very opposite. We dishonor it – and the God we profess to serve." (Boice)

iii. "Thy *nature* is holy, all thy *works* are holy, and thy *word* is holy; therefore, thy *house* – thy *Church*, should be holy. The *building* itself should be *sanctified*– should be so *consecrated* to thy worship alone, that it shall never be employed in any other service. The *ministers* of this Church should be holy, the *members* holy, the *ordinances* holy; its *faith*, its *discipline*, and its *practice* holy. And this at all times, and in all circumstances; for holiness becometh thine house – for ever." (Clarke)

c. **O LORD, forever:** God's great being and character – His might, sovereignty, strength, and holiness – are His eternally. He is *from everlasting* (Psa 93:2) and unchanging; He is **forever**. He will not diminish or devalue with time.

i. **Forever:** "For evermore is literally 'to length of days', as in the final phrase of Psalms 23. Here, as

there, the length is undefined, and it is left to the New Testament to explore it further and find it as eternal as God himself (Rev 21:22 to Rev 22:5).” (Kidner)

ii. “Is all this so? Does Jehovah reign? Then let us offer the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. He is worthy to receive; and in our giving, there is also the receiving of the benefits of His reign which enrich and glorify our lives.” (Morgan)

The Lord Will Not Forsake His People

Psa 94:1 LORD, you are a God who punishes; reveal your anger!

Psa 94:2 You are the judge of us all; rise and give the proud what they deserve!

Psa 94:3 How much longer will the wicked be glad? How much longer, LORD?

Psa 94:4 How much longer will criminals be proud and boast about their crimes?

Psa 94:5 They crush your people, LORD; they oppress those who belong to you.

Psa 94:6 They kill widows and orphans, and murder the strangers who live in our land.

Psa 94:7 They say, "The LORD does not see us; the God of Israel does not notice."

Psa 94:8 My people, how can you be such stupid fools? When will you ever learn?

Psa 94:9 God made our ears—can't he hear? He made our eyes—can't he see?

Psa 94:10 He scolds the nations—won't he punish them? He is the teacher of us all—hasn't he any knowledge?

Psa 94:11 The LORD knows what we think; he knows how senseless our reasoning is.

Psa 94:12 LORD, how happy are those you instruct, the ones to whom you teach your law!

Psa 94:13 You give them rest from days of trouble until a pit is dug to trap the wicked.

Psa 94:14 The LORD will not abandon his people; he will not desert those who belong to him.

Psa 94:15 Justice will again be found in the courts, and all righteous people will support it.

Psa 94:16 Who stood up for me against the wicked? Who took my side against the evildoers?

Psa 94:17 If the LORD had not helped me, I would have gone quickly to the land of silence.

Psa 94:18 I said, "I am falling"; but your constant love, O LORD, held me up.

Psa 94:19 Whenever I am anxious and worried, you comfort me and make me glad.

Psa 94:20 You have nothing to do with corrupt judges, who make injustice legal,

Psa 94:21 who plot against good people and sentence the innocent to death.

Psa 94:22 But the LORD defends me; my God protects me.

Psa 94:23 He will punish them for their wickedness and destroy them for their sins; the LORD our God will destroy them.

Psalms 94:1-23

Psalms 94 – The LORD, My Defense

"In this song we see how the very things which assault faith, and threaten to produce despair, may be made the opportunity for praise, in the place and act of worship." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. The rebellious and wicked who must hear and obey God.

1. (1-3) Recognizing God as Judge of the earth.

**O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs—
O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!
Rise up, O Judge of the earth;
Render punishment to the proud.
LORD, how long will the wicked,
How long will the wicked triumph?**

a. **O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs:** The psalmist begins with the simple and profound recognition that **vengeance belongs** to God. He sees and judges righteously among mankind and will bring **vengeance** as appropriate.

- This means that vengeance does not belong to man.
- This means that vengeance belongs to One who sees more than we see and knows more than we know.
- This means it is appropriate to ask God to dispense vengeance and trust His superior knowledge, wisdom, and timing in doing so.

i. In Jer 51:56, God is given the title, *the God of recompense*, and we are assured, *He will surely repay*.

ii. "God is the author of *retributive justice*, as well as of *mercy*. This retributive justice is what we often term *vengeance*, but perhaps improperly; for vengeance with us signifies an excitement of *angry passions*, in order to *gratify* a *vindictive spirit*, which supposes itself to have received some real injury; whereas what is here referred to is that simple act of justice which gives to all their due." (Clarke)

iii. "Dr. Samuel Johnson, the maker of the first great English dictionary, made the distinction well when he said, 'Revenge is an act of passion, vengeance of justice; injuries are revenged, crimes are avenged.'" (Boice)

b. O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth:

The repetition of the statement adds more than emphasis and intensity. It also connects God's **vengeance** with His glory, His *shining forth*. In the end, vengeance upon sin and sinners is part of God's own glory.

i. Maclaren spoke to the repetition of the request: "A man in straits continues to cry for help till it comes, or till he sees it coming."

ii. "The prayer for Yahweh to 'shine forth' is a prayer for a theophany, when the Lord appears in his royal splendor to bring justice into a world of anarchy." (VanGemeren)

c. Rise up, O Judge of the earth: The psalmist has committed the work of vengeance to God but will still pray that God fulfills His office and will **render punishment to the proud.**

i. Morgan described how, through the centuries, God's persecuted people have prayed like this: "In catacombs, in dungeons, in places of the uttermost desolation – when it has seemed to sense that the way of God was blocked, that His rule was overcome, that all evil things had gained the victory – these songs have arisen, proclaiming Him King, mocking all the vain and foolish thoughts of man, and declaring His ultimate victory."

ii. "They who have no profound loathing of sin, or who have never felt the crushing weight of legalised

wickedness, may shrink from such aspirations as the psalmist's, and brand them as ferocious; but hearts longing for the triumph of righteousness will not take offence at them." (Maclaren)

iii. "If the execution of justice be a right thing – and who can deny the fact? – then it must be a very proper thing to desire it; not out of private revenge, in which case a man would hardly dare to appeal to God, but out of sympathy with right, and pity for those who are made wrongfully to suffer." (Spurgeon)

d. **LORD, how long?** This adds a note of urgency to the psalmist's prayer. With a combination of boldness and humility, he asks God to account for the time until this righteous vengeance will be accomplished. Like the souls under the altar, the psalmist cries out, **how long?** (Rev 6:9-10)

i. "So the only question about the power of evil is *how long?* (94:3); there is no room for the crippling suspicion that God, perhaps, is blind (94:7) or has done a deal with darkness (94:20). Nothing has changed the Sun or corrupted the Judge: it is simply that the night is long (94:1b, 2a)." (Kidner)

ii. **How long?** "Many a time has this bitter complaint been heard in the dungeons of the Inquisition, at the whipping-posts of slavery, and in the prisons of oppression. In due time God will publish his reply, but the full end is not yet." (Spurgeon)

2. (4-7) *Recognizing the rebellion of the wicked.*

**They utter speech, and speak insolent things;
All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.
They break in pieces Your people, O LORD,
And afflict Your heritage.
They slay the widow and the stranger,**

**And murder the fatherless.
Yet they say, "The LORD does not see,
Nor does the God of Jacob understand."**

a. **They utter speech, and speak insolent things:** The first thing noted about the wicked is their *words*. They speak defiant, **insolent things** and they **boast in themselves**. Conversely, a mark of the righteous is their humble, gracious speech.

i. "Words often wound more than swords, they are as hard to the heart as stones to the flesh; and these are poured forth by the ungodly in redundancy." (Spurgeon)

b. **They break in pieces Your people, O LORD:** The next thing noted about the wicked is their actions against God's **people**, those who are His **heritage**. They destroy them (**break in pieces**) and **afflict** them. Conversely, a mark of the righteous is their love for God's people.

i. "These tyrants are not necessarily foreign; they may equally be home-born, like the apostate King Manasseh or the cynics of Isa 5:18 ff." (Kidner)

c. **They slay the widow and the stranger:** The third thing noted about the wicked is their attack against the weak and disadvantaged, extending even to **murder**. Conversely, a mark of the righteous is their care for the weak and disadvantaged.

i. "Must not such inhuman conduct as this provoke the Lord? Shall the tears of widows, the groans of strangers, and the blood of orphans be poured forth in vain? As surely as there is a God in heaven, he will visit those who perpetrate such crimes; though he bear long with them, he will yet take vengeance, and that speedily." (Spurgeon)

d. **The LORD does not see:** The fourth thing about the wicked is their ignorance and arrogance toward God. They deny that He exists in the manner that He is revealed in the Bible. This ignorance of God leads to a deluded arrogance toward Him.

i. "They were blindly wicked because they dreamed of a blind God. When men believe that the eyes of God are dim, there is no reason to wonder that they give full license to their brutal passions." (Spurgeon)

ii. "There is no obligation to speak smooth words to rulers whose rule is injustice and their religion impiety. Ahab had his Elijah, and Herod his John Baptist. The succession has been continued through the ages." (Maclaren)

iii. **The God of Jacob:** "So they call him sarcastically; he who taketh that name to himself, but hath no regard to his people, but gives up his Jacob to the spoil, and to the rage of their enemies." (Poole)

3. (8-11) Rebuking the senseless rebels.

**Understand, you senseless among the people;
And you fools, when will you be wise?
He who planted the ear, shall He not hear?
He who formed the eye, shall He not see?
He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct,
He who teaches man knowledge?
The LORD knows the thoughts of man,
That they *are* futile.**

a. **Understand, you senseless among the people:** The psalmist attempted what some think is a useless mission – to help the **senseless** and **fools** with instruction and understanding. He specifically spoke to those mentioned in the previous verse, who believed God did not see or understand their wickedness.

i. The idea of **senseless** is the same as in Psa 92:6 – a brutish man, as much animal as human. “You who, though you think yourselves the wisest of men, yet in truth are the most brutish of all people.... You that have only the shape, but not the understanding, of a man in you.” (Poole)

b. **He who planted the ear, shall He not hear?** The logic is simple and solid. The God who created the **ear** can hear, and the God who created the **eye** can see. The God of all wisdom and knowledge will hold men and women to account for their lives.

i. “The logic is inescapable, once the premise is accepted that God is our Maker. What the psalm does not contemplate is the crowning absurdity, reserved for modern man, of rejecting even this.” (Kidner)

ii. “The psalmist does not say, He that planted the ear, *hath he not an ear?* He that formed the eye, *hath he not eyes?* No; but, Shall he not *hear?* Shall he not *see!* And why does he say so? To prevent the error of humanizing God, of attributing members or corporeal parts to the infinite Spirit.” (Clarke)

c. **The LORD knows the thoughts of man:** God’s wisdom is so great that He even knows the **thoughts** of men and women. This great God must be appropriately feared, respected, and obeyed. This was important for the **senseless** and **fools** to hear and maybe even understand.

i. The Apostle Paul later quoted Psa 94:11 in 1Co 3:20 speaking of God’s triumph over the exaltation of defiant human wisdom and knowledge, and in Rom 1:21 speaking of the futility of man’s intellect against God.

B. The people of God who must hear and obey His instruction.

1. (12-15) Consolation for God's people – they will never be cast off.

**Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD,
And teach out of Your law,
That You may give him rest from the days of
adversity,
Until the pit is dug for the wicked.
For the LORD will not cast off His people,
Nor will He forsake His inheritance.
But judgment will return to righteousness,
And all the upright in heart will follow it.**

a. **Blessed is the man whom You instruct:** Perhaps the senseless and fools will never listen to God, but His people must. He will **instruct** and **teach** them from His word (**out of Your law**).

i. "Here it is the pupil speaking, not the teacher, and the words are a triumph of faith: a positive reaction to present trouble." (Kidner)

ii. "All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man that finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning, is a happy man." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **That You may give him rest from the days of adversity:** This is a wonderful promise to those who receive the teaching from God's word. They have **rest** when the inevitable **days of adversity** come. This **rest** is theirs **until the pit is dug for the wicked**, until God sets all things right in His judgment.

i. "There is rest from evil even while in evil, if we understand the purpose of evil." (Maclaren)

ii. **Days of adversity:** "Remember the martyr-age, and the days of the Covenanters, who were hunted upon the mountains like the partridge. You must not wonder if the easy places of the earth are not yours, and if the sentinel's stern duties should fall to your lot. It is so, and so it must be, for God has so ordained it." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Until the pit is dug for the wicked:** "...until the cold grave hold his body, and hot hell hold his soul." (Trapp)

c. **For the LORD will not cast off His people:** This is beautiful and powerful assurance, given first to Israel under the Old Covenant but extending to the child of God under a better covenant. Some teach that God *did cast off* Israel, but this and many other passages contradict that idea. With repetition and emphasis, God insists: **Nor will He forsake His inheritance.**

i. "Even if Satan should come, and whisper to you, 'The Lord has cast thee off,' do not believe it; it cannot be. The devil has his cast-offs, but God has no cast-offs. Sometimes he takes the devil's castaways, and makes them to be the trophies of his mighty grace." (Spurgeon)

d. **Judgment will return to righteousness:** God promises to bring His righteous reign and judgment to all things, bringing satisfaction to **the upright in heart.**

i. "All shall be set to rights, and every one have his due, according to Rom 2:6-10, if not sooner, yet at the day of judgment without fail." (Trapp)

2. (16-19) *Comfort for God's people – God will help them.*

Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?

Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

**Unless the LORD had been my help,
My soul would soon have settled in silence.
If I say, "My foot slips,"
Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up.
In the multitude of my anxieties within me,
Your comforts delight my soul.**

a. Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?

The previous lines of this psalm expressed satisfaction in God's ultimate righteous judgment. Now the psalmist considers that this hoped-for day is not yet. He understands and expresses his own limitations in dealing with **evildoers** and **workers of iniquity**.

b. Unless the LORD had been my help: His rhetorical question was answered; the LORD **had been** and would be his help against the wicked.

i. "If we could find friends elsewhere, it may be our God would not be so dear to us; but when, after calling upon heaven and earth to help, we meet with no succour but such as comes from the eternal arm, we are led to prize our God, and rest upon him with undivided trust." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Settled in silence:** "The psalmist confesses that he is deeply troubled by the evildoers, even so that he nearly slipped away into the netherworld." (VanGemeren)

c. Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up: God's mercy would sustain him in the difficult day; even when it seemed that his **foot** slipped, he would not fall.

i. **Will hold me up:** “It is a metaphor taken from anything *falling*, that is *propped*, *shored up*, or *buttressed*. How often does the *mercy* of God thus prevent the ruin of weak believers, and of those who have been unfaithful!” (Clarke)

d. **Your comforts delight my soul:** With enemies and difficulties about him, the psalmist needed help and comfort from God. The LORD answered with many **comforts** that brought **delight** to his **soul**. This rescued him from the **multitude of anxieties within**.

i. **Your comforts:** “How sweet are the comforts of the Spirit! Who can muse upon eternal love, immutable purposes, covenant promises, finished redemption, the risen Saviour, his union with his people, the coming glory, and such like themes, without feeling his heart leaping with joy?” (Spurgeon)

ii. **In the multitude of my anxieties within:** “... whilst my heart was filled with *various and perplexing thoughts*, as this Hebrew word signifies, and tormented with cares and fears about my future state.” (Poole)

3. (20-23) *Cover for God’s people – God is their defense.*

**Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law,
Have fellowship with You?**

**They gather together against the life of the righteous,
And condemn innocent blood.**

But the LORD has been my defense,

And my God the rock of my refuge.

He has brought on them their own iniquity,

And shall cut them off in their own wickedness;

The LORD our God shall cut them off.

a. **Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You?** The psalmist knew that wickedness is sometimes found in high places. Some thrones are marked by **iniquity** and some laws are devised by **evil**. Such will never fellowship with God.

i. This suggests the thought from 1Jn 1:6 : *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*

ii. **Which devises evil by law:** "The height of crime is reached when rulers use the forms of justice as masks for injustice, and give legal sanction to 'mischief.' The ancient world groaned under such travesties of the sanctity of Law; and the modern world is not free from them." (Maclaren)

iii. **Which devises evil by law:** "They legalise robbery and violence, and then plead that it is the law of the land; and so indeed it may be, but it is a wickedness for all that." (Spurgeon)

b. **They gather together against the life of the righteous:** This kind of wickedness was described previously in verses 4-6, condemning **innocent blood**. John described the same wicked heart: *Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you (1Jn 3:13).*

i. **They gather together:** "In everything that is *evil*, they are in *unity*. The devil, his angels, and his children, all join and draw together when they have for their object the destruction of the works of the Lord." (Clarke)

c. **But the LORD has been my defense:** Though the wicked who were set against the psalmist were in high places, he had an even greater **defense**. God Himself was **the rock of my refuge**.

i. **My defense...my refuge:** "Having assured the righteous of things God will do for them, the writer now adds a word of personal testimony as if to say that what he has been promising to others he has proved true himself." (Boice)

ii. "In him, even in him alone, we find safety, let the world rage as it may; we ask not aid from man, but are content to flee into the bosom of omnipotence." (Spurgeon)

d. **He has brought on them their own iniquity:** The ultimate doom of the wicked is anticipated. His judgment would be righteous and fitting. Their doom would be connected to **their own iniquity** and **in their own wickedness**. The punishment would fit the crime and those who had cut off others would themselves be cut off. This was his confidence and defense.

i. **He has brought on them their own iniquity:** "That is the punishment of sin. It seems strange that it is so, but sin is the punishment of sin. When a man has once sinned, it is part of his punishment that he is inclined to sin again, and so on *ad infinitum*." (Spurgeon)

ii. The repetition of **cut them off** gives great emphasis to the idea. It also matches the repetition of "vengeance" in the first verse of this psalm. The psalm begins with trusting God to set things right and ends with the same confidence.

Let Us Sing Songs of Praise

Psa 95:1 Come, let us praise the LORD! Let us sing for joy to God, who protects us!

Psa 95:2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and sing joyful songs of praise.

Psa 95:3 For the LORD is a mighty God, a mighty king over all the gods.

Psa 95:4 He rules over the whole earth, from the deepest caves to the highest hills.

Psa 95:5 He rules over the sea, which he made; the land also, which he himself formed.

Psa 95:6 Come, let us bow down and worship him; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

Psa 95:7 He is our God; we are the people he cares for, the flock for which he provides. Listen today to what he says:

Psa 95:8 "Don't be stubborn, as your ancestors were at Meribah, as they were that day in the desert at Massah.

Psa 95:9 There they put me to the test and tried me, although they had seen what I did for them.

Psa 95:10 For forty years I was disgusted with those people. I said, 'How disloyal they are! They refuse to obey my commands.'

Psa 95:11 I was angry and made a solemn promise: 'You will never enter the land where I would have given you rest.' "

Psalms 95:1-11

Psalms 95 – God Worthy of Our Humble and Obedient Worship

This wonderful psalm is quoted and analyzed in Heb 3:7 to Heb 4:13. There (Heb 4:7) it is said to be "in David." This may indicate that David the Son of Jesse was the unattributed author, but it is also possible that the author of Hebrews simply referred to the Book of Psalms as "David's Book."

James Montgomery Boice observed regarding the commentary on Psalms 95 in Heb 3:7 to Heb 4:13 : "This

is probably the most thorough citing of an Old Testament passage in the New Testament."

A. The how and Whom of worship.

1. (1-2) Worship in many forms.

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD!

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;

Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

a. **Let us sing to the LORD:** The psalmist first mentions honoring God with *song* and doing so in *community*. Singing is not the only way to give honor and worship to God, but it is a chief and important way. Also, importantly, the exhortation is **let us sing** – that it should be done with the community of God's people.

i. "The invocation to praise in Psa 95:1-2, gives a striking picture of the joyful tumult of the Temple worship. Shrill cries of gladness, loud shouts of praise, songs with musical accompaniments, rang simultaneously through the courts." (Maclaren)

ii. "Singing expresses human thought emotionally, and Christianity is a feeling religion. More particularly, singing expresses joy, and the Bible's religion at its heart is joyful." (Boice)

iii. Yet we are to **sing to the LORD**. "It is to be feared that very much even of religious singing is not unto the Lord, but unto the ear of the congregation. Above all things we must in our service of song take care that all we offer is with the heart's sincerest and most fervent intent directed towards the Lord himself." (Spurgeon)

b. **Let us shout joyfully:** God should be honored with a happy, enthusiastic heart. There is a place for a somber, reflective mood in worship, but it should not be the

dominant tone. God's people have much to **shout joyfully** about.

i. "Before making ourselves small before him (as we must, Psa 95:6 f.), we greet him here with unashamed enthusiasm as our refuge and rescuer (Psa 95:1).\" (Kidner)

ii. "It is a part of Christian duty, and certainly of Christian wisdom, to try to catch that tone of joy in worship which rings in this psalm.\" (Maclaren)

c. **To the Rock of our salvation:** This is a title for God with both *experiential* and *theological* meaning. It points to a genuine *depth* of both thought and experience. Worship should not be simply saying things about God, but with thought and with a connection to what we have experienced or need to experience from Him.

d. **Let us come before His presence:** This means that worship should be done with a conscious sense of God's **presence**. God's people don't sing into empty space; He is in their **presence** and they are in **His presence**. There is – or should be – a true connection between God and His people in worship.

i. **His presence** doesn't mean God in the holy of holies, symbolized at the ark of the covenant. There could be no invitation to the community to **come before His presence** there. Even when they had the tabernacle and the temple, the Jewish people rightly understood the *spiritual presence* of God.

e. **With thanksgiving:** Our worship should express a heart of **thanksgiving** to our God, who has done so much for us.

i. "We are permitted to bring our petitions, and therefore we are in honour bound to bring our thanksgivings.\" (Spurgeon)

f. **Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms:** This is what the psalmist himself intended with this psalm. We can also surmise that he turned the attention of God's people to the broader collection of psalms as a source of inspiration for their worship.

2. (3-5) *The greatness of the God to be worshipped.*

**For the LORD is the great God,
And the great King above all gods.
In His hand *are* the deep places of the earth;
The heights of the hills *are* His also.
The sea *is* His, for He made it;
And His hands formed the dry *land*.**

a. **For the LORD is the great God:** Understanding the greatness of God helps us to properly worship Him. Most everyone has some sense of awe or appreciation of greatness when in the presence of someone the culture regards as great. This is natural; it is even more natural and appropriate for us to deeply regard Yahweh as **the great God** and **the great King above all gods**.

i. "No doubt the surrounding nations imagined Jehovah to be a merely local deity, the god of a small nation, and therefore one of the inferior deities; the Psalmist utterly repudiates such an idea." (Spurgeon)

ii. Adam Clarke observed regarding verse 3: "The Supreme Being has *three* names here: EL, JEHOVAH, ELOHIM, and we should apply none of them to *false gods*. The *first* implies his *strength*; the *second* his *being* and *essence*; the *third*, his *covenant relation* to mankind."

b. **In His hand are the deep places of the earth:** One way God's greatness is illustrated is by His mastery over creation. From the lowest valley to the highest **hills**,

from the **sea** to the **dry land**, God's **hands formed** them.

c. **The sea is His, for He made it:** The oceans and seas of this world belong to God. Whatever nation may make claim on the seas, or the concept of international waters may intend, the psalmist made a specific declaration that **the sea is** God's.

i. "To the heathen, incidentally, *the sea* might represent a power even older than the gods, not conquered without a bitter struggle. It is a far cry from this to the simplicity of *The sea is his, for he made it.*" (Kidner)

ii. John Trapp thought of the contrast between the power of God and the old legend of King Canute of England, who commanded the tide of the sea to stop – but of course, it did not. "Canute confuted his flatterers (who told him that all things in his dominions were at his beck and check) by laying his command on the sea to come up no higher into his land, but it obeyed him not."

iii. "If God owns the sea because he made it, he owns you, because he made you too. You are his creature, and by all the rights of creatorship you belong to him. He claims you; will you dispute the claim?" (Spurgeon)

3. (6-7a) *Invitation to humble worship.*

**Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
For He *is* our God,
And we *are* the people of His pasture,
And the sheep of His hand.**

a. **Oh come:** There is a sweet sense of emphasis in these words. There is a gentle plea here: exhorting the

readers to do what is right before God – which is also good for them.

b. **Let us worship and bow down:** The ideas of community (**let us**) and **worship** are repeated from earlier in the psalm, with an added sense of humility (**bow down**). The idea behind the Hebrew word **worship** is essentially *to bow down*; the thought is emphasized and given more intensity through repetition.

i. "In His presence, man must bow down before Him, man must kneel in the attitude of complete submission and obeisance. This is a truth of which we need to remind ourselves." (Morgan)

ii. "It is not always easy to unite enthusiasm with reverence, and it is a frequent fault to destroy one of these qualities while straining after the other." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Worship and bow down:** "Not before a crucifix, not before a rotten image, not before a fair picture of a foul saint: these are not *our makers*; we made them, they made not us. Our God, unto whom we must sing, in whom we must rejoice, before whom we must worship, 'is *a great King above all gods*': he is no god of lead, no god of bread, no brazen god, no wooden god; we must not fall down and worship our *Lady*, but our *Lord*; not any *martyr*, but our *Maker*; not any *saint*, but our *Saviour*." (Boils, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker:** In the previous verses the psalmist spoke of God's mastery over all creation. Now he includes humanity itself among God's creation. We owe humble worship to God because He *made* us. Worship is an obligation that the creature owes to the Creator.

i. The three main verbs in verse 6 are all connected with the idea of getting low and being humble. “*Three distinct words are used here to express three different acts of adoration: 1. Let us worship, nishtachaveh, let us prostrate ourselves; the highest act of adoration by which the supremacy of God is acknowledged. 2. Let us bow down, nichraah, let us crouch or cower down, bending the legs under, as a dog in the presence of his master, which solicitously waits to receive his commands. 3. Let us kneel, nibrachah, let us put our knees to the ground, and thus put ourselves in the posture of those who supplicate.*” (Clarke)

ii. The redeemed have at least two great reasons to humbly worship God. He is both their Maker and their Redeemer. They belong to Him twice over, in both creation and redemption.

iii. “We have the right to come before God with great gladness, but never without a sense of His majesty, and what is due to it.” (Morgan)

d. **For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture:** Yahweh is also worthy of our humble worship because **He is our God**. The ancient Hebrew had something of a *choice* of gods, and it was a deliberate act of allegiance to say, “Yahweh is my God. I belong to Him and He belongs to me – I am like **the sheep of His hand.**”

i. “**The sheep of his hand;** which are under his special care and conduct, or government; which is oft expressed by the hand, as Num 4:28; Num 31:49, Jdg 9:29.” (Poole)

ii. “The repeated reference to the ‘hand’ of Jehovah is striking. In it are held the deeps: it is...‘forming’ the land, as a potter fashioning his clay: it is a shepherd’s

hand, protecting and feeding his flock (Psa 95:7).” (Maclaren)

iii. “The familiar metaphors of verse 7 express his commitment, which is constant (*our God*), and his care, which is all-sufficing (*his pasture*) and personal (*his hand*). He is no hireling.” (Kidner)

B. Warning to those who reject worship.

1. (7b-9) *Exhortation to the people of God.*

Today, if you will hear His voice:

“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion,

As *in* the day of trial in the wilderness,

When your fathers tested Me;

They tried Me, though they saw My work.”

a. **Today, if you will hear His voice:** The psalmist once again exhorts us to act, to **hear** the **voice** of God in the midst of their worship. God *spoke* to His people and He gave them and gave us a word of warning.

i. “If you want to worship God, make sure you do not harden your heart against God’s Word, or quarrel with him or test him, as the ancients did.” (Boice)

ii. This word of warning is important enough to be referenced three times in the book of Hebrews (Heb 3:7; Heb 3:15; Heb 4:7). In Heb 4:7 the emphasis is on the word **today**, indicating the urgency of listening to God with a soft heart *today*.

iii. “This is the uniform time and tense of the Holy Ghost’s exhortations. He saith nothing about tomorrow, except to forbid our boasting of it, since we know not what a day shall bring forth. All his instructions are set to the time and tune of ‘Today, today, today.’” (Spurgeon)

iv. When the writer to the Hebrews quoted this passage in Heb 3:7, he specifically attributed it to the Holy Spirit: *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says*. He was certain that the words of Psalms 95 were inspired by the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit was Yahweh.

b. Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion:

The **rebellion** and the **day of trial** refer primarily to the trial at Meribah (Num 20:1-13). But more generally, they speak of Israel's refusal to trust and enter the Promised Land during the Exodus (Num 13:30 to Num 14:10). God did not accept their unbelief and condemned that generation of unbelief to die in the wilderness (Num 14:22-23 and 14:28-32).

i. The appeal **do not harden your hearts** means there is some aspect of the will involved when it comes to the hardness (or softness) of heart. Many regard a hard or soft heart as something that just *happens* to someone and is beyond his ability to control. Here the Holy Spirit indicates differently.

ii. The strong words in the second half of this psalm are connected to the sweet, stirring words of the first half. Humble worship of Yahweh and the recognition of Him as Creator and God should lead to a listening ear and a soft, surrendered heart toward Him. There is something wrong when the worshipper does not obey and trust God.

iii. Charles Spurgeon suggested several ways that we may **harden** our **hearts**.

- Some harden their hearts by resolving not to demonstrate emotion in regard to spiritual things.
- Some harden their hearts by delaying a real relationship with God.

- Some harden their hearts by pretending doubts and foolish criticism.
- Some harden their hearts by getting into evil company.
- Some harden their hearts by focusing on silly amusements “all intended to kill time and prevent thought upon divine things.”
- Some harden their hearts by indulging in a favorite sin.

c. **When your fathers tested Me:** We test God by our unbelief. Israel **saw** the **work** of God, yet would not trust Him at Meribah or in the wilderness in general. We are warned not to do the same.

i. To reject God’s invitation **today** surely means to test Him. “Is God to wait as a lackey upon you? You deserve his wrath, will you slight his love? He speaks in amazing tenderness, will you exhibit astounding hardness?” (Spurgeon)

ii. **Though they saw My work** means that God gives us *reason* to trust Him. To ignore those reasons is to provoke and to test God.

iii. “Every one comes in the Christian life, once at least, to Kadesh-barnea [Num 13:26]. On the one hand the land of rest and victory; on the other the desert wastes. The balance, quivering between the two, is turned this way by faith; that by unbelief. Trust God, and rest. Mistrust Him, and the door closes on rest, to open to wanderings, failure, and defeat.” (Meyer)

2. (10-11) *Warning the people of God.*

**“For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation,
And said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts,**

And they do not know My ways.'
So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest.'"

a. **For forty years I was grieved:** God offered the generation that came out of Egypt the opportunity to take the Promised Land by faith. Their unbelieving rejection of God's offer **grieved** Him for **forty years**. It was evidence that they went **astray in their hearts**, away from humble confidence in Him as Creator and Redeemer.

i. "The desert wanderings were but a symbol, as they were a consequence, of their wanderings in heart. They did not know His ways; therefore they chose their own." (Maclaren)

ii. "O the desperate presumption of man, that he should offend his Maker 'forty years!' O the patience and long suffering of his Maker, that he should allow him forty years to offend in!" (Horne)

iii. **Astray in their hearts:** "Their heart was obstinately and constantly at fault; it was not their head which erred, but their very heart was perverse." (Spurgeon)

b. **They do not know My ways:** To know God is to trust Him. Unbelief is evidence of small or faulty knowledge of God.

i. "**My ways**; either, 1. My laws or statutes, which are frequently called God's ways. Or rather, 2. My works, as it is expressed, Psa 95:9, which also are commonly so called. They did not know nor consider and remember those great things which I had wrought for them and among them." (Poole)

c. **So I swore in My wrath:** God did not honor the unbelief of His people. It was an insult to Him, and

prompted a solemn, angry declaration from Him.

i. "Be not wilfully, wantonly, repeatedly, obstinately rebellious. Let the example of that unhappy generation serve as a beacon to you; do not repeat the offences which have already more than enough provoked the Lord." (Spurgeon)

d. **They shall not enter My rest:** God condemned Israel's generation of unbelievers to die in the wilderness, so that a generation of faithful believers could inherit the Promised Land, His appointed place of **rest** for His people.

i. "There can be no rest to an unbelieving heart. If manna and miracles could not satisfy Israel, neither would they have been content with the land which flowed with milk and honey." (Spurgeon)

ii. "By ending on this note the psalm sacrifices literary grace to moral urgency. If this is a psalm about worship, it could give no blunter indication that the heart of the matter is severely practical: nothing less than a bending of wills and a renewal of pilgrimage." (Kidner)

Worship in the Splendor of Holiness

Psa 96:1 Sing a new song to the LORD! Sing to the LORD, all the world!

Psa 96:2 Sing to the LORD, and praise him! Proclaim every day the good news that he has saved us.

Psa 96:3 Proclaim his glory to the nations, his mighty deeds to all peoples.

Psa 96:4 The LORD is great and is to be highly praised; he is to be honored more than all the gods.

Psa 96:5 The gods of all other nations are only idols, but the LORD created the heavens.

Psa 96:6 Glory and majesty surround him; power and beauty fill his Temple.

Psa 96:7 Praise the LORD, all people on earth; praise his glory and might.

Psa 96:8 Praise the LORD's glorious name; bring an offering and come into his Temple.

Psa 96:9 Bow down before the Holy One when he appears; tremble before him, all the earth!

Psa 96:10 Say to all the nations, "The LORD is king! The earth is set firmly in place and cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with justice."

Psa 96:11 Be glad, earth and sky! Roar, sea, and every creature in you;

Psa 96:12 be glad, fields, and everything in you! The trees in the woods will shout for joy

Psa 96:13 when the LORD comes to rule the earth. He will rule the peoples of the world with justice and fairness.

Psalms 96:1-13

Psalms 96 – Declaring the Glory of God to the Entire World

There are widening circles in this wonderful psalm. It first speaks to the people of God, then to all the nations of the earth, and finally to creation itself.

There is no author attributed in the Hebrew text, but Psalms 96 contains the middle verses of the psalm David sang for the entrance of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (1Ch 16:23-33), suggesting that David was the author.

A. A new song for all the earth to sing.

1. (1-3) Worshipping God with a new song.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.

**Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.**

**Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.**

a. **Sing to the LORD a new song:** God loves to receive the rejoicing and praise of His people expressed in **song**, especially the **new song**. A **new song** can come from old saints as they gain fresh awareness of God's love and grace.

i. "The song is to be new, because a new manifestation of Jehovah's Kingdom has awakened once more the long-silent harps." (Maclaren)

ii. **A new song:** "A song of peculiar excellence, for in this sense the term *new* is repeatedly taken in the Scriptures. He has done extraordinary things for us, and we should excel in praise and thanksgiving." (Clarke)

iii. "A new song, always new; keep up the freshness of your praise. Do not drivel down into dull routine.... We have new mercies to celebrate, therefore we must have new songs." (Spurgeon)

b. **Sing to the LORD, all the earth:** Praise is due to Yahweh from **all the earth**. He isn't a local deity, meant for only Israel. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the psalmist saw a day when **all the earth** would **sing a new song** to the LORD, described in its fulfillment in Rev 5:9.

c. **Proclaim the good news of His salvation:** These songs to the Lord were not only celebrations; they were also proclamations. They proclaimed **His salvation** and declared **His glory** and **His wonders** to the entire world, to **the nations**.

i. **From day to day:** "Other news delights us only at first hearing; but the good news of our redemption is sweet from day to day...saith Luther, Christ is now as fresh unto me as if he had shed his blood but this very hour." (Trapp)

ii. **From day to day** means we should never *stop* proclaiming **the good news of His salvation**. "Every man should praise God every day – on each returning morning, and on every evening – for the assurance that there is a way of salvation provided for him, and that he may be happy for ever." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **Declare His glory:** "*Glory* is a difficult word to define. It refers to the majestic aura of the divine presence, which is why the stanza speaks of 'the splendor of his holiness.' But it is also more than that. *Kabod*, the Hebrew word, refers to something that is impressive or weighty." (Boice)

iv. "You know men are very much attracted by aught of glory and renown. They will even rush to the cannon's mouth for so-called glory.... tell them about the glory thereof, what a glory it brings to Christ, and to what a glory it will bring every sinner by- and-by." (Spurgeon)

v. "If the Lord Jesus has become King of your heart, and has brought blessing to you, do not hesitate to give voice to your allegiance. In private, sing unto Him a new song; in public, show forth His salvation, and declare His glory." (Meyer)

2. (4-6) *Why God deserves praise.*

**For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the peoples *are* idols,**

**But the LORD made the heavens.
Honor and majesty *are* before Him;
Strength and beauty *are* in His sanctuary.**

a. **For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised:**
The psalmist would not give God empty or unthinking praise. He first spoke regarding the greatness of God, and noted that His greatness made Him **greatly to be praised**.

i. **For the LORD is great:** "He is, in every possible sense, 'great;' great in dignity, in power, in mercy; and therefore 'greatly to be praised' by every creature." (Horne)

b. **He is to be feared above all gods:** Yahweh deserves worship from the entire earth because He isn't like the **gods** and **idols** of the pagans. He is the *Creator* who **made the heavens**.

i. "**Idols;** or, *nothings*, as they are called, 1Co 8:4; 1Co 10:19; or, *vain things*, as the word signifies, and is translated by others. The sense is, Though they have usurped the name and place of the Divine Majesty, yet they have nothing of his nature or power in them." (Poole)

ii. "The term *idols* is *elilim*, which the Old Testament treats as a mere parody of *elohim* (God). It is the word translated 'worthless' in Job 13:4 ('worthless physicians') and Jer 14:14 ('worthless divination')." (Kidner)

iii. "Yahweh alone is God and all other deities are 'fakes.' They cannot be gods, because Yahweh alone has made heaven. The pagans may claim that their gods have power over the heavenly realms, but this is excluded by virtue of Yahweh's sole claim to having created 'the heavens.'" (VanGemeren)

iv. "The contemptuous name of the nation's gods as 'Nothings' is frequent in Isaiah." (Maclaren)

c. **Honor and majesty are before Him:** God's greatness and power give Him a regal, royal bearing. He is marked by **strength and beauty**.

i. **Strength and beauty:** "In him are combined all that is mighty and lovely, powerful and resplendent. We have seen rugged strength devoid of beauty, we have also seen elegance without strength; the union of the two is greatly to be admired." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Not in outward show or parade of costly robes does the glory of God consist; such things are tricks of state with which the ignorant are dazzled; holiness, justice, wisdom, grace, these are the splendours of Jehovah's courts, these the jewels and the gold, the regalia, and the pomp of the courts of heaven." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary:** "If we ask whether this *sanctuary* is earthly or heavenly, the probable answer is both. The earthly one was a 'copy and shadow' of the heavenly (Heb 8:5)." (Kidner)

3. (7-9) *Calling the entire world to glorify God.*

Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples,

Give to the LORD glory and strength.

Give to the LORD the glory *due* His name;

Bring an offering, and come into His courts.

Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!

Tremble before Him, all the earth.

a. **Give to the LORD the glory due His name:** The theme is repeated – God is worthy of praise from the entire earth, from all **families of the peoples**. In this

context, **give** means to recognize and to declare the **glory and strength** that belong to God in all His being.

i. When we **give unto the LORD** these things, we do not give or attribute things to Him that He did not have before. We recognize things as they really are, because God is full of **glory and strength**.

ii. "Neither men nor angels can confer anything upon Jehovah, but they should recognise his glory and might, and ascribe it to him in their songs and in their hearts." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The meaning of the Hebrew word for worship is to prostrate oneself, not to praise God for his attributes, which is what the English word *worship* means. But here we must note that although the meaning of the Hebrew word differs from the English word, the Hebrew understanding of worship nevertheless also involves giving God praise for his attributes. That is what is being said here. Here the nations of the world are told to give God glory." (Boice)

b. **O families of the peoples:** God promised Abraham, *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Gen 12:3), and that promise would be fulfilled in Abraham's greatest descendant, Jesus the Messiah. The same word for *families* found in Gen 12:3 is used in verse 7: **Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, give to the LORD glory and strength**. This verse may refer to the fulfillment of the promise of Gen 12:3.

c. **Give to the LORD...Give to the LORD.... Give to the LORD:** We come into God's presence to receive, but also to **give** unto Him. We give Him our time, our attention, our worship, our surrender, our service, our resources, and much more.

i. "In this stanza the worship of God is described as our bringing something to God rather than our coming to God to get something from him. We usually think of it the other way around. We think of coming to church to receive either: (1) knowledge through the teaching or (2) specific gifts from God as his answers to our prayers. But here worship is chiefly our bringing praise and offerings to God." (Boice)

ii. **Give to the LORD the glory due His name:** "It is a debt; and a debt, in equity, must be paid. The honour due to his name is to acknowledge him to be holy, just, true, powerful." (Clarke, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. The triple repetition of this phrase impresses the urgency of the call, and is a subtle reference to the Triune nature of God.

d. **Bring an offering, and come into His courts:** *Sacrifice* is appropriate for the worshipper. True worship is often revealed by sacrifice in some way.

i. **Bring an offering:** "The word here rendered '*offering*' – *minkhah* – is that which is commonly used to denote a *bloodless* offering, a thank-offering." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

e. **In the beauty of holiness:** The psalmist called the world to **worship** God in recognition of His **holiness**, and to see that there is a **beauty** connected to His **holiness**.

i. **Beauty** and **holiness** are not often connected ideas in our popular culture. Yet in reality, there is surpassing allure and attractiveness in true holiness. If a purported type of holiness has little beauty, it may not be true holiness.

ii. "Fear of God is the blush upon the face of holiness enhancing its beauty." (Spurgeon)

iii. God's **holiness** – His "set-apart-ness" – has a wonderful and distinct **beauty** about it. It is *beautiful* that God is God and not man, that He is more than the greatest man or a super-man. His holy love, grace, justice, and majesty are *beautiful*.

B. The declaration to the nations and to creation.

1. (10) *What to say among the nations.*

**Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns;
The world also is firmly established,
It shall not be moved;
He shall judge the peoples righteously."**

a. **Say among the nations:** The theme of speaking to the entire earth continues, calling the people of the world to worship and honor God as they should.

b. **The LORD reigns:** This is a fundamental and powerful message for God's people to proclaim to the world. Whether others recognize His reign or not, the LORD nevertheless **reigns**, and that reign will one day be openly and obviously imposed upon the whole world.

i. **Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns":** "*Justin Martyr*, in his dialogue with *Trypho* the Jew, quotes this passage thus: 'Say among the nations, the Lord ruleth *by the wood*,' meaning the *cross*; and accuses the Jews of having blotted this word out of their Bibles, because of the evidence it gave of the truth of Christianity. It appears that this reading did exist anciently in the *Septuagint*, or at least in some ancient copies of that work, for the reading has been quoted by *Tertullian*, *Lactantius*, *Arnobius*, *Augustine*, *Cassiodorus*, *Pope Leo*, *Gregory of Tours*, and others." (Clarke)

c. **The world also is firmly established:** God's people are also meant to tell the world that His work as Maker

of the earth is good and lasting. He didn't make the world in a careless way; it is **firmly established**, so that **it shall not be moved**.

d. **He shall judge the peoples righteously**: The world also needs to hear that God is a righteous **judge**, before whom the whole world must give account. When the world hears and believes this, they will rightly prepare themselves for that judgment to come.

i. "**He shall judge the people righteously**; he shall not abuse his invincible power and established dominion to the oppression of his people, as other princes frequently do, but shall govern them by the rules of justice and equity, which is the only foundation of a true and solid peace." (Poole)

2. (11-13) *The message of joy to all creation.*

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;

Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;

Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* in it.

Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD.

For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.

He shall judge the world with righteousness,

And the peoples with His truth.

a. **Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad**: The thought introduced in the previous line is used as reason for all creation to be glad. The fact that God is a righteous judge who will call things into account is good for creation – good for the **heavens**, the **earth**, the **sea**, the **field**, and **all the trees**.

i. "Transported with a view of these grand events, and beholding in spirit the advent of King Messiah; the Psalmist exults in most jubilant and triumphant strains, calling the whole creation to break forth into

joy, and to celebrate the glories of redemption.” (Horne)

ii. Paul had this concept in mind in Rom 8:21 : *because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

iii. “The thought that inanimate nature will share in the joy of renovated humanity inspires many glowing prophetic utterances, eminently those of Isaiah – as e.g., Isa 35:1-10. The converse thought, that it shared in the consequences of man’s sin, is deeply stamped on the Genesis narrative.” (Maclaren)

iv. **All the trees of the woods:** According to VanGemenen, the idea here is more than just a forest, but of wilderness or even thick jungle. The sense is that all creation is excited that God **is coming to judge the earth.**

b. **For He is coming to judge the earth:** The psalm ends with the joyful confidence that God will **judge** and set things right. The goodness of this is apparent to those who love God, love His ways, and hurt over the injustices of the present age.

i. **He is coming to judge the earth:** “To rule it with discretion; not to tax it, and control it by force, as kings often do, but to preside as magistrates do whose business it is to see justice carried out between man and man.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “As C. S. Lewis points out, the ancients lived in a world where judges usually needed to be bribed and right judgment was exceedingly hard to come by, especially for weak, poor, or disadvantaged persons. In such a climate, the disadvantaged did not fear judgment but rather longed for it, because it meant a

day when evil would be punished and those who did the right things would be vindicated.” (Boice)

iii. “The world of men may be glad also, because the reign of Jesus means equity for the oppressed, equal-handed justice for the poor, peace among the nations.” (Meyer)

iv. “Honesty, veracity, integrity, will rule upon his judgment-seat. No nation shall be favoured there, and none be made to suffer through prejudice. The black man shall be tried by the same law as his white master, the aboriginal shall have justice executed for him against his civilised exterminator, the crushed and hunted Bushman shall have space to appeal against the Boer who slaughtered his tribe, and the South Sea Islander shall gain attention to his piteous plaint against the treacherous wretch who kidnapped him from his home. There shall be true judgment given without fear or favour. In all this let the nations be glad, and the universe rejoice.” (Spurgeon)

v. “He smites with destruction. But the fierceness of His wrath, the weight of His stroke, are inspired by His love of man, and His determination to establish that order of life in which strength and beauty shall abound.” (Morgan)

The Lord Reigns

Psa 97:1 The LORD is king! Earth, be glad! Rejoice, you islands of the seas!

Psa 97:2 Clouds and darkness surround him; he rules with righteousness and justice.

Psa 97:3 Fire goes in front of him and burns up his enemies around him.

Psa 97:4 His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees it and trembles.

Psa 97:5 The hills melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.

Psa 97:6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the nations see his glory.

Psa 97:7 Everyone who worships idols is put to shame; all the gods bow down before the LORD.

Psa 97:8 The people of Zion are glad, and the cities of Judah rejoice because of your judgments, O LORD.

Psa 97:9 LORD Almighty, you are ruler of all the earth; you are much greater than all the gods.

Psa 97:10 The LORD loves those who hate evil; he protects the lives of his people; he rescues them from the power of the wicked.

Psa 97:11 Light shines on the righteous, and gladness on the good.

Psa 97:12 All you that are righteous be glad because of what the LORD has done! Remember what the holy God has done, and give thanks to him.

Psalms 97:1-12

Psalms 97 – The Greatness and Wisdom of God

Psalms 97 continues in the theme and tone of the previous psalms. It uses phrases found in other psalms and other Old Testament passages. "The psalmist's mind is saturated with old sayings, which he finds flashed up into new meaning by recent experiences. He is not 'original,' and does not try to be so; but he has drunk in the spirit of his predecessors, and words which to others were antiquated and cold blaze with light for him, and seem made for his lips." (Alexander Maclaren)

"The psalm contains many allusions to other parts of the Old Testament, all of which have been shaped into a magnificent hymn." (Willem VanGemeren)

G. Campbell Morgan summarized this psalm: "The effects of His judgments are declared. His adversaries are destroyed, His glory is revealed, His people are filled with joy."

"Psalms 96, 97, , 98 each hail God's coming as the world's King. But Psalms 96, 98 soar with delight at what is in store for the world when God returns, while in Psalms 97 the frightening, awesome side of God's kingly rule is emphasized." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. Rejoicing in the greatness of God.

1. (1) A summons to rejoice in God's reign.

The LORD reigns;

Let the earth rejoice;

Let the multitude of isles be glad!

a. **The LORD reigns:** Like Psalms 93, this psalm begins suddenly and wonderfully with the proclamation of Yahweh's rule. He is not a useless idol or local deity. Yahweh is not passive, nor the "watchmaker" who created all things and then left it alone. He **reigns**; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actively plans, acts, and rules over the universe.

i. **The LORD reigns:** "Here is a simple proposition, which is a self-evident axiom, and requires no proof: JEHOVAH is *infinite* and *eternal*; is possessed of *unlimited power* and *unerring wisdom*; as he is the *Maker*, so he must be the *Governor*, of all things. His authority is absolute, and his government therefore universal. In all places, on all occasions, and in all times, Jehovah reigns." (Clarke)

b. **Let the earth rejoice:** Yahweh's reign brings joy to the earth. We could imagine an evil or dark deity whose reign would bring terror. We see such in a limited sense, where men and devils are given room to exercise their wicked will. Yet the more Yahweh's reign is obvious and

observed, the more rejoicing there is, extending to **the multitude of the isles**, the most distant places.

i. **The multitude of isles**: "The Hebrews called by the name of 'isles,' not only countries surrounded by the sea, but all the countries which the sea divided from them; so that the term became synonymous with 'Gentiles.'" (Horne)

2. (2-6) *The LORD's greatness over creation.*

**Clouds and darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.**

**A fire goes before Him,
And burns up His enemies round about.
His lightnings light the world;
The earth sees and trembles.
The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples see His glory.**

a. **Clouds and darkness surround Him**: The psalmist may have had in mind the appearance of God at Mount Sinai, which was marked by *a thick cloud on the mountain and the smoke of a furnace* (Exo 19:16-20).

i. "*Clouds and thick darkness* warn of his unapproachable holiness and hiddenness to presumptuous man (yet the hiddenness owes nothing to caprice: 2b), while the *fire* and *lightnings* reveal a holiness that is also devouring and irresistible (cf. Heb 12:29).\" (Kidner)

ii. Adam Clarke had a curious thought regarding **a fire goes before Him**: "Literally, this and the following verse may refer to the electric fluid, or to

manifestations of the Divine displeasure, in which, by means of *ethereal fire*, God consumed his enemies.” (Clarke)

b. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne: God’s throne is not based on deception, bribery, the blood of conquest, or even hereditary right. **The foundation of His throne** is nothing else but **righteousness and justice**. This is why the earth can rejoice at His reign (verse 1).

i. “Jehovah is an autocrat, but not a despot. Absolute power is safe in the hands of him who cannot err, or act unrighteously.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “We know that in His government there can be no departure from righteousness, no deflection of justice. This is the secret of our confidence, and should be the inspiration of perpetual songs, of ceaseless worship.” (Morgan)

c. A fire goes before Him: This is a poetic description of the same kind of phenomena that happened at Mount Sinai (Exo 19:16-20). This phrase either refers to what God did then or uses the same ideas to describe a future display of God’s sovereign presence, **the presence of the Lord of the whole earth**, when **all the peoples see His glory**.

i. “The lightning flash is meant to set forth the sudden, swift forth-darting of God’s delivering power, which awes a gazing world, while the hills melting like wax from before His face solemnly proclaim how terrible its radiance is, and how easily the mere showing of Himself annihilates all high things that oppose.” (Maclaren)

ii. “The parallelism of ‘LORD’ (*YHWH* [Yahweh]) and ‘Lord’ (Adonai) affirms that Yahweh is the Lord (‘great

King') of all the earth." (VanGemeren)

ii. "'The Lord of the whole earth' is an unusual designation, first found in a significant connection in Jos 3:11; Jos 3:13, as emphasising His triumph over heathen gods, in leading the people into Canaan." (Maclaren)

iv. **The mountains melt like wax:** "Men cannot move the hills, with difficulty do they climb them, with incredible toil do they pierce their way through their fastnesses, but it is not so with the Lord, his presence makes a clear pathway, obstacles disappear, a highway is made, and that not by his hand as though it cost him pains, but by his mere presence, for power goes forth from him with a word or a glance." (Spurgeon)

v. **All the peoples see His glory:** "This will be more eminently the case at the second advent, when the trumpet of the archangel shall proclaim his approach in the clouds of heaven, and all the tribes of the earth shall see him coming in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." (Horne)

B. Instructing the people.

1. (7-9) Instructing the nations about the LORD's greatness.

**Let all be put to shame who serve carved images,
Who boast of idols.**

Worship Him, all *you* gods.

Zion hears and is glad,

And the daughters of Judah rejoice

Because of Your judgments, O LORD.

For You, LORD, *are* most high above all the earth;

You are exalted far above all gods.

a. **Let all be put to shame who serve carved images:** Considering the greatness and power of

Yahweh, those who **boast of idols** should be ashamed. Poetically speaking, even the **gods** of the heathen **worship Him**.

i. "So the gods themselves are summoned to fall down before this triumphant Jehovah, as Dagon did before the Ark." (Maclaren)

b. **Zion hears and is glad**: The whole earth benefits from the majestic and awesome revelation of God, but His people are especially **glad**. His righteous **judgments** make **the daughters of Judah rejoice**.

i. Charles Spurgeon thought that this was relevant to an ultimate restoration of the land of Israel: "The day shall come when the literal Zion, so long forsaken, shall joy in the common salvation."

ii. **The daughters of Judah rejoiced**: "David alludes to a custom familiar in Judea, of forming choral bands of maidens after a victory or some happy circumstance." (Le Blanc, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **You, LORD, are most high above all the earth**: Previously the psalmist spoke about God to the world. Here he addresses God directly, praising and extolling Him as **exalted far above all gods**.

i. John Trapp connected verse 9 with Eph 1:21 : *far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come*.

2. (10-12) *Instructing the people of God about His righteous deliverance.*

You who love the LORD, hate evil!
He preserves the souls of His saints;
He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.
Light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart.

**Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous,
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy
name.**

a. **You who love the LORD, hate evil:** Again, the psalmist addresses the people of Israel who love the LORD, and introduces a strong statement. Despite the seemingly abrupt transition, the psalmist sensibly connected the appearance of the God whose very throne is founded on righteousness and justice with the heart for righteousness and justice that His people should also have.

i. It may be that this command is one of the most often broken among God's people. We find it easy to be *too* loving, or rather express a twisted love that pretends to both **love the LORD** and love or accept the things that He hates.

ii. It is possible for us to be *angry* at sin or evil, without truly hating it. We may be angry at the trouble sin causes, but not hate it enough to repent and forsake our sin.

b. **He preserves the souls of His saints:** The psalmist described many ways that God blesses and protects His people.

- He cares for their **souls**.
- He **delivers** them from the **wicked**.
- He sends **light** before their path.
- He gives **gladness** unto them.

i. "...*preserves* would be better rendered 'guards' or 'watches over'; and *lives* [**souls**] is a word that includes the whole person. It is a promise of God's defence and watchful care, not a guarantee against casualties." (Kidner)

ii. **Preserves the souls:** "He may leave the bodies of his persecuted saints in the hand of the wicked, but not their souls, these are very dear to him, and he preserves them safe in his bosom." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Light is sown:** "You do not realize it, but you are sowing light. Each act of self-denial, in which you cast yourself into the ground to die, is a seed-germ of the harvest of gladness." (Meyer)

iv. **Light is sown:** "Every grace of God is a *seed*, which he intends should produce a

thousand fold in the hearts of genuine believers. We do not so much require *more* grace from God, as the *cultivation* of what we have received. God will not give more, unless we improve what we have got. Remember *the parable of the talents*. Let the *light* and *gladness* be faithfully cultivated, and they will multiply themselves till the whole body shall be full of light, and the whole soul full of happiness." (Clarke)

v. Kidner argued that **light is sown** was not the best translation. "Light *dawns*...is surely the right reading here, following one Hebrew manuscript and all the ancient versions." (Kidner)

c. **Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous:** Considering the greatness of God and His goodness to His people, it is proper for them to **rejoice** in *Him*. The rejoicing should not be primarily in what He has given, but in the LORD Himself – with plenty of thanksgiving at even **the remembrance of His holy name**.

i. "Having sung the glory of the Redeemer, the Psalmist delineates the duty of the redeemed." (Horne)

ii. "It began by calling upon the people of the whole earth to rejoice in God's rule (v. 1). It ends by calling

upon us to lead the way in this worship.” (Boice)

Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord

Psa 98:1 Sing a new song to the LORD; he has done wonderful things! By his own power and holy strength he has won the victory.

Psa 98:2 The LORD announced his victory; he made his saving power known to the nations.

Psa 98:3 He kept his promise to the people of Israel with loyalty and constant love for them. All people everywhere have seen the victory of our God.

Psa 98:4 Sing for joy to the LORD, all the earth; praise him with songs and shouts of joy!

Psa 98:5 Sing praises to the LORD! Play music on the harps!

Psa 98:6 Blow trumpets and horns, and shout for joy to the LORD, our king.

Psa 98:7 Roar, sea, and every creature in you; sing, earth, and all who live on you!

Psa 98:8 Clap your hands, you rivers; you hills, sing together with joy before the LORD,

Psa 98:9 because he comes to rule the earth. He will rule the peoples of the world with justice and fairness.

Psalms 98:1-9

Psalms 98 – A New Song for His Marvelous Things

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm**, and it is the only one given that simple title with no other explanation. Like Psalms 96, it speaks of praise to God for His work of salvation in widening circles – first Israel, then all the earth, and finally all creation.*

"A noble, spirit-stirring Psalm. It may have been written on the occasion of a great national triumph at the time; but

may, perhaps, afterwards be taken up at the period of the great millennial restoration of all things.” (Thomas Chalmers, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. Singing praise to the Savior.

“There are striking parallels between the first part of Psalms 98 and Mary’s Magnificat (Luk 1:46-55), which may mean that the mother of Jesus had the psalm in mind as she composed her hymn and that she rightly saw that the promises of the psalm were to be fulfilled in the spiritual victories to be achieved by Jesus Christ.” (Boice)

1. (1) Praising Yahweh with a new song.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
For He has done marvelous things;
His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

a. **Sing to the LORD a new song:** The idea of a **new song** is found in many places in Scripture (Psa 33:3; Psa 40:3; Psa 96:1; Psa 144:9; Psa 149:1; Isa 42:10; and Rev 5:9; Rev 14:3). The concept of the **new song** means there should be something fresh and dynamic about worship and the songs we sing to God.

i. Miriam didn’t use an Egyptian song. Deborah didn’t use Miriam’s song. “There must be new songs on new occasions of triumph.” (Spurgeon)

ii. **A new song:** “The song of redeeming grace can never grow old, even though the same words recur.... Are not His mercies new every morning, and His faithfulness every night? Is not His love always at work spreading thy table for new meals, making thy bed for new slumber, contriving new alleviations and delights? Look out for these till meditation induces thanksgiving.” (Meyer)

iii. "The *new song*, in the context of this hope of victory, evidently means a song to be composed for the occasion; other suggestions seem over-elaborate." (Kidner)

b. **For He has done marvelous things:** The **new song** has a reason – to extol the great works of God, His **marvelous** things. It isn't empty praise or singing for the sake of singing. The worship is connected to life experience of His **marvelous things**.

i. **Marvelous things:** "*Niphlaoth*, 'miracles,' the same word as in Psa 96:3, where we translate it *wonders*." (Clarke)

c. **His right hand and His holy arm:** These are the instruments of God's **victory**, the expressions of His skill and strength. As in Isa 52:10, the idea of **His holy arm** is that God has rolled up His sleeve to do His mighty work. Together, His hand and arm **have gained Him the victory**.

i. **Right hand:** "So Christ fought our battle with his right hand; he did it with ease, with strength, and with infinite wisdom." (Spurgeon)

ii. "As the singer rejoices over the salvation of God manifested on behalf of Israel, he emphasises the fact that it has been wrought by Jehovah alone. 'His right hand, and His holy arm'; these were the only instruments available for, or capable of working deliverance." (Morgan)

2. (2-3) *The revelation of Yahweh's victory.*

**The LORD has made known His salvation;
His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.**

He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

a. **The LORD has made known His salvation:** The *marvelous things* of verse 1 have been published **in the sight of the nations**.

- This is evident because of the public nature of God's unfolding work of redemption.
- This is a prophecy of a coming day when all the earth will hear.
- This is an exhortation to God's people to proclaim the message of His **salvation** and **righteousness**.

i. **Salvation, righteousness:** "Through his power the Lord has obtained victory – 'salvation' and 'righteousness.' In Isaiah these two words are synonyms for the establishment of God's just order on earth in fulfillment of the prophetic word (cf. Isa 46:13; Isa 51:5-6; Isa 51:8).\" (VanGemeren)

ii. **Made known:** "The Lord is to be praised not only for effecting human salvation, but also for making it known, for man would never have discovered it for himself.\" (Spurgeon)

iii. The New Testament shows that God **made known His salvation** in a way beyond the psalmist's expectation. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ and the worldwide spread of the Gospel are fulfillments of this.

iv. "The Hebrew singer celebrated a truth the full value of which he hardly recognized.\" (Morgan)

b. **He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel:** One of God's *marvelous things* is His unending **mercy and faithfulness** to the covenant people of Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob. It is strange to think that some believe God has *forgotten* **His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel.**

c. **All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God:** God's work was centered in **the house of Israel**, but the **ends of the earth** were never to be forgotten. From the very beginning of His covenant plan with Abraham, all the families of the earth were in view (Gen 12:3).

i. **All the ends of the earth:** "All the inhabitants of the earth, from one end to another." (Poole)

B. Bringing praise with music.

1. (4) *The music of joyful song.*

**Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.**

a. **Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth:** Since the great news of God's *marvelous things* (verse 1) goes to the *ends of the earth* (verse 3), it is right for **all the earth** to praise Yahweh.

i. "The *joyful noise* of verses 4 and 6 meets us elsewhere as the spontaneous shout that might greet a king or a moment of victory. It is the word translated 'shout aloud' in Zec 9:9, the prophecy that was fulfilled on Palm Sunday." (Kidner)

ii. "'The noise of temple worship was legendary,' according to Marvin E. Tate. He points to the accounts of Israel's worship in 2 Chronicles 29:25-30 and Ezr 3:10-13, where in the second passage the sound of the instruments and the shouts of the people are said to have been "heard far away" (Ezr 3:13)." (Boice)

b. **Break forth in song, rejoice:** The praise is to be enthusiastic, varied, and in song. This is the opposite of the dreary singing of somber songs.

2. (5-6) *The music of many instruments.*

**Sing to the LORD with the harp,
With the harp and the sound of a psalm,
With trumpets and the sound of a horn;
Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.**

a. **Sing to the LORD with the harp:** This can be understood in two senses. The first is that musical instruments should accompany the singing mentioned in verse 4. The second is that the instruments themselves **sing to the LORD** a song of praise.

b. **With the harp...trumpets...a horn:** A band of musicians added to the praise of the song, the psalm, and the joyful shout. The combination of instruments assumes some level of effort and skill among the musicians.

i. **The sound of a psalm:** "I think *zimrah*, which we translate *Psalm*, means either a *musical instrument*, or a *species of ode* modulated by different voices." (Clarke)

ii. "*The horn* [shofar] proclaimed such events as the year of jubilee, or the accession of a king: Lev 25:9 ff.; 1Ki 1:39." (Kidner)

C. Majestic praise from all creation.

1. (7-8) *The praise from all creation.*

**Let the sea roar, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell in it;
Let the rivers clap *their* hands;
Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,**

a. **Let the sea roar, and all its fullness:** The musical instruments mentioned in the previous verses were not the only voices to give God the praise He deserves. Now the **sea** itself is called to add its **roar** to the sound of praise. The **rivers** and **hills** are brought into the worship team with their **joyful** sounds.

i. "These appeals to nature in her great departments – of the sea in its mighty amplitude, and the earth with its floods and hills – form, not a warrant, but a call on Christian ministers to recognise God more in their prayers and sermons as the God of Creation, instead of restricting themselves so exclusively to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Do the one, and not leave the other undone." (Chalmers, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **The world and those who dwell in it:** The poetic image of praise from inanimate creation is wonderful, but not enough. The praise should also come from **those who dwell in it** – perhaps a reference not only to people, but the animal world as well.

i. "The Psalmist, beholding in spirit the accomplishment of the promises, the advent of Christ, and the glory of his kingdom...bids the whole earth break forth into joy." (Horne)

2. (9) *The reason for this mighty praise.*

**For He is coming to judge the earth.
With righteousness He shall judge the world,
And the peoples with equity.**

a. **For He is coming to judge the earth:** The strong and deep praise described in this psalm is not only for the *marvelous things* God has done (verse 1). It is also for the work He is about to do – **with righteousness He shall judge the world**. His righteous rule and reign

will be a welcome relief for all creation that has suffered under the sin and rebellion of mankind.

i. "It makes the point which Rom 8:19 ff. expounds: that nature will not come into its own until man himself, its proper master, is ruled in *righteousness* and *equity*." (Kidner)

ii. "I think of the way C. S. Lewis developed this idea in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. In the first section of that book, when Narnia was under the power of the wicked Witch of the North, the land was in a state of perpetual winter. Spring never came. But when Aslan rose from the dead the ice began to melt, flowers bloomed, and the trees turned green. It is poetical writing, but it describes something that will happen. The rivers will indeed clap their hands. The mountains will indeed sing. And we will all join in." (Boice)

b. **And the peoples with equity**: In the ancient world, justice was rare – and this is still true sometimes. Judges were bribed or turned by ideology and prejudice. The idea of coming judgment

with equity was a great relief to those who were often oppressed and denied justice.

The Lord Our God Is Holy

Psa 99:1 The LORD is king, and the people tremble. He sits on his throne above the winged creatures, and the earth shakes.

Psa 99:2 The LORD is mighty in Zion; he is supreme over all the nations.

Psa 99:3 Everyone will praise his great and majestic name. Holy is he!

Psa 99:4 Mighty king, you love what is right; you have established justice in Israel; you have brought

righteousness and fairness.

Psa 99:5 Praise the LORD our God; worship before his throne! Holy is he!

Psa 99:6 Moses and Aaron were his priests, and Samuel was one who prayed to him; they called to the LORD, and he answered them.

Psa 99:7 He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they obeyed the laws and commands that he gave them.

Psa 99:8 O LORD, our God, you answered your people; you showed them that you are a God who forgives, even though you punished them for their sins.

Psa 99:9 Praise the LORD our God, and worship at his sacred hill! The LORD our God is holy.

Psalms 99:1-9

Psalms 99 – The Holy God, Present and Revealed

This psalm, without title in the Hebrew text, is a triple proclamation of God's holiness, as Isaiah would later do (Isa 6:3).

"Here, after the carefree delight of Psalms 98, we recollect how exalted and holy he is, and how profound is the reverence we owe him." (Derek Kidner)

A. The holy presence of God.

1. (1) God is present in His sanctuary.

The LORD reigns;

Let the peoples tremble!

He dwells *between* the cherubim;

Let the earth be moved!

a. **The LORD reigns:** For the third time, a psalm begins with this phrase (see also Psa 93:1; Psa 97:1). Psalms 99 speaks of God's presence (**He dwells between the**

cherubim), but in His presence He **reigns**. God isn't simply *there*; He is a reigning king.

b. **Let the peoples tremble**: In the presence of a sovereign God, it is appropriate to **tremble**. Even the **earth** can be **moved** at His presence – much more so should **the peoples** be moved.

i. "Saints quiver with devout emotion, and sinners quiver with terror when the rule of Jehovah is fully perceived and felt." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Men of the world ridiculed '*the* Quakers' for trembling when under the power of the Holy Spirit; had they been able to discern the majesty of the Eternal they would have quaked also." (Spurgeon)

c. **He dwells between the cherubim**: God is enthroned in His sanctuary. It is difficult to say whether the psalmist had in mind the heavenly sanctuary of God or the earthly representation of it (the tabernacle or temple); both are true and either one fits.

i. "His living throne of *cherubim* – not the weaponless cupids of religious art but the mighty beings whose forms summed up for Ezekiel the whole kingdom of earthly creatures – this living throne is a flying chariot, fiery with judgment and salvation." (Kidner)

2. (2-3) *God is present in Zion.*

The LORD is great in Zion,

And He *is* high above all the peoples.

Let them praise Your great and awesome name—

He *is* holy.

a. **The LORD is great in Zion**: God is present in heaven and in all the earth, but He has special regard for **Zion**, the city of Jerusalem. In that city set in the hills, He is **high above the peoples**.

i. **The LORD is great in Zion:** “In the Hebrew text the words lie in this order, *The Lord in Zion...is great.*” (Poole)

b. **Let them praise Your great and awesome name:** God rightfully receives praise because of His greatness and because **He is holy.**

i. **He is holy:** Holiness, at its root, has the idea of *apartness*. It describes someone, or something, which is *set apart* from other people or things. An object can be holy if it is set apart for sacred service. A person is holy if he is are set apart for God’s will and purpose.

ii. “*Holy* is a word to emphasize the distance between God and man: not only morally, as between the pure and the polluted, but in the realm of being, between the eternal and the creaturely.” (Kidner)

iii. God Himself is set apart in many senses. He is set apart from creation, in that the Lord God is not a creature, and He exists outside of all creation. If all creation were to dissolve, the Lord God would remain. He is set apart from *humanity*, in that His nature or essence is *Divine*, not *human*. God is not a *super-man* or the *ultimate* man. God is not merely *smarter* than any man, *stronger* than any man, *older* than any man, or *better* than any man. You can’t measure God on man’s chart at all. He is *Divine*, and we are *human*.

iv. God’s holiness is a part of everything He is and does. God’s power is a *holy power*. God’s love is a *holy love*. God’s wisdom is a *holy wisdom*. Holiness is not an aspect of God’s personality; it is the essence of His entire Being.

v. "While the word itself signifies simply separateness, and was used with reference to other gods by other peoples, it acquired a new significance in this Divine revelation.... God was revealed as separated from everything unjust, untrue, evil, in His character, and therefore in all His dealings with men, whether in the giving of law, or in the activities of government." (Morgan)

vi. **He is holy**: "As this not only ends this verse but the *fifth* also, and in effect the *ninth*, it seems to be a [kind] of *chorus* which was sung in a very solemn manner at the conclusion of each of these parts. His *holiness* – the immaculate purity of his nature, was the reason why he should be exalted, praised, and worshipped." (Clarke)

B. The holy strength of God.

1. (4) *The strong righteousness of God.*

The King's strength also loves justice;

You have established equity;

You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

a. **The King's strength also loves justice**: God's great strength and sovereignty could, in theory, be used for evil. Yet Yahweh the King **loves justice** and has **established equity**.

i. "He is no arbitrary ruler. His reign is for the furtherance of justice." (Maclaren)

ii. "God abuseth not his kingly power to tyranny, but joineth it with his justice and uprightness. Regiment without righteousness is but robbery with authority." (Trapp)

b. **You have executed justice**: With God, **justice** and **equity** are not mere slogans or promises. He has

executed justice among His people and in the world and will continue to do so.

i. "Most kingdoms have an establishment of some kind, and generally it is inequitable; here we have an establishment which is equity itself. The Lord our God demolishes every system of injustice, and right alone is made to stand." (Spurgeon)

ii. "That king-craft which delights in cunning, favouritism, and brute force is as opposite to the divine kingship as darkness to light. The palace of Jehovah is no robber's fortress nor despot's castle, built on dungeons, with stones carved by slaves, and cemented with the blood of toiling serfs." (Spurgeon)

2. (5) *The proper response to His holy strength.*

**Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at His footstool—
He is holy.**

a. **Exalt the LORD our God:** Understanding the power, holiness, and goodness of God should lead us to **exalt** Him and to humbly **worship** Him.

b. **Worship at His footstool:** Most commentators regard this as the ark of the covenant, connected to their understanding of *between the cherubim* in verse 1. The ark of the covenant is called His footstool (1Ch 28:2), but so are Jerusalem (Lam 2:1) and the earth as a whole (Isa 66:1, Mat 5:35, Act 7:49).

i. "The object of the exaltation and 'worship at his footstool' is to submit oneself to his sovereignty and to respond properly to his holy presence." (VanGemenen)

c. **He is holy:** The statement from verse 3 is repeated for emphasis. God **is holy** in all He is and all He does.

i. "The Bible calls God holy more than anything else, more than sovereign, more than just, more than merciful or loving. In fact 'holy' is the only epithet of God that is repeated three times for emphasis, like this: 'Holy, holy, holy' (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8)."

ii. "Holiness is the harmony of all the virtues. The Lord has not one glorious attribute alone, or in excess, but all glories are in him as a whole; this is the crown of his honour and the honour of his crown. His power is not his choicest jewel, nor his sovereignty, but his holiness." (Spurgeon)

C. The holy revelation of God.

1. (6-7) God revealed to His priests.

**Moses and Aaron were among His priests,
And Samuel was among those who called upon His name;
They called upon the LORD, and He answered them.
He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar;
They kept His testimonies and the ordinance He gave them.**

a. **Moses and Aaron were among His priests:** The psalmist listed three notable priests in the history of Israel – **Moses, Aaron, and Samuel**. These were ones who prayed (**called upon His name**) and God revealed Himself (**He answered them**).

i. "To encourage the faithful in the worship of God, the examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are [cited as evidence], men of like infirmities with ourselves, whose prayers were heard, both for themselves and others." (Horne)

ii. "Priestly functions were exercised by Moses, as in sprinkling the blood of the covenant, [Exo 24:1-18] and in the ceremonial connected with the

consecration of Aaron and his sons, [Lev 8:1-36] as well as at the first celebration of worship in the Tabernacle [Exo 40:18-33]." (Maclaren)

iii. **Priests:** "The noun is a participial form from the verb 'serve' and is here loosely used for 'servants' or 'intercessors.' Moses, Aaron, and Samuel interceded on Israel's behalf." (VanGemeren)

iv. **Among those who called upon His name:** "Evidently those that call upon the name of God compose a separate class.... It is a high honor to be included among them that call upon His name. If you cannot find your place in any other class, perhaps it is here." (Meyer)

b. **He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar:** The pillar of cloud was the physical representation of God's presence with Israel in the wilderness. God spoke to Moses from that **cloudy pillar** (Exo 33:9).

c. **They kept His testimonies:** The psalmist noted the general obedience of **Moses, Aaron, and Samuel**.

2. (8-9) *God revealed in forgiveness and holiness.*

**You answered them, O LORD our God;
You were to them God-Who-Forgives,
Though You took vengeance on their deeds.
Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at His holy hill;
For the LORD our God *is* holy.**

a. **You were to them God-Who-Forgives:** God **answered** these men (and others) who sought Him. He revealed Himself to them as the **God-Who-Forgives**. Significantly, even these men of whom it was said, *they kept His testimonies* (verse 7) need this revelation of the **God-Who-Forgives**.

b. **Though You took vengeance on their deeds:** It isn't clear if the ones referred to here are the *priests* mentioned in verse 6 (Moses, Aaron, and Samuel) or if it is referring to the people they prayed for (Israel as a whole). Most commentators regard **their deeds** as referring to Israel's deeds, but it is also true that Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were each disciplined by God in some way.

i. "God spared them, but showed his displeasure at their misdoings. He chastised, but did not consume them. This is amply proved in the history of this people." (Clarke)

ii. "Through all the history of His people He has been faithful, both in forgiveness and in vengeance, and that because He is holy. Therein is the reason for worship. Herein also is the reason for trembling." (Morgan)

c. **Exalt the LORD our God:** Once more the reader is compelled to **exalt** God, to **worship** Him, and to recognize God's holiness.

d. **For the LORD our God is holy:** For the emphatic third time, God's holiness is proclaimed. Later, in heavenly visions, the Prophet Isaiah (Isa 6:3) and the Apostle John (Rev 4:8) would hear this three-time declaration of holiness combined into a single sentence.

i. "This is the supreme reason for confidence in Him, and so the supreme inspiration of worship." (Morgan)

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Psa 100:1 Sing to the LORD, all the world!

Psa 100:2 Worship the LORD with joy; come before him with happy songs!

Psa 100:3 Acknowledge that the LORD is God. He made us, and we belong to him; we are his people, we are his flock.

Psa 100:4 Enter the Temple gates with thanksgiving; go into its courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise him.

Psa 100:5 The LORD is good; his love is eternal and his faithfulness lasts forever.

Psalms 100:1-5

Psalms 100 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving for All Lands

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of Thanksgiving**, and it is the only psalm in the collection to bear this title. It speaks of an invitation to the whole earth to know and to worship God. "It is jubilant with confidence for the whole earth, as it contemplates the glory of that earth, when all its people are submitted to the reign of Jehovah." (G. Campbell Morgan)*

A. The what and why of giving praise.

1. (1-2) What to do: Praise God.

Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

Serve the LORD with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

a. **Make a joyful shout to the LORD:** Unlike the several previous psalms, Psalms 100 does not begin with a declaration of God's sovereignty or character. It begins with the simple and direct exhortation to **all you lands** to praise God with **a joyful shout**. This is a call to the nations, extending far beyond Israel's borders.

i. **A joyful shout:** "The original word signifies a glad shout, such as loyal subjects give when their king appears among them. Our happy God should be worshipped by a happy people; a cheerful spirit is in keeping with his nature, his acts, and the gratitude which we should cherish for his mercies." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The *joyful noise* is...the equivalent in worship to the homage-shout or fanfare to a king." (Kidner)

iii. **All you lands:** "The nations must recognize who the Lord is. He is Yahweh, by whose grace and blessings his people exist. The nations too are invited to sing hymns to the Lord and to worship him." (VanGemeran)

b. **Serve the LORD with gladness:** The whole earth is invited to **serve the LORD**. The psalmist likely had in mind the service of worship or temple rituals, but the principle applies to *any* service directed to God. Those who **serve the LORD** should do it **with gladness**.

i. **Serve the LORD with gladness:** "It is your privilege and duty to be happy in your religious worship. The religion of the true God is intended to remove human misery, and to make mankind happy. He whom the religion of Christ has not made happy does not understand that religion, or does not make a proper use of it." (Clarke)

ii. "As for the true believer in Jesus, he serves his God because he loves to serve him; he assembles with the great congregation because it is his delight to worship the Most High." (Spurgeon)

c. **Come before His presence with singing:** As in many places in the psalms, praise is expressed in song. **Singing** is not the only way to praise God, but it is the chief way to praise Him.

2. (3) *Why to do it: He is our Creator and Shepherd.*

Know that the LORD, He is God;

***It is He who* has made us, and not we ourselves;**

***We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.**

a. **Know that the LORD, He is God:** The praise that comes to God from His people and all **lands** should be

mindful. We have many reasons to worship Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, and the reasons begin with the recognition that **He is God**.

i. "To *know* is to have firm ground underfoot, the prerequisite of praise (cf. 40:2f.), and this knowledge is ours by gift; indeed by command." (Kidner)

ii. **Know that the LORD, He is God**: "Be convinced of it, ye heathens, whose fantasies have forged false gods." (Trapp)

b. **It is He who has made us**: The next reason to worship God is in appropriate recognition of His work as *Creator*. The idea that we could make **ourselves** is absurd, and we should worship the One **who has made us**.

i. "The sense of God's proprietorship is the true basis of our consecration. We must realize His rights over us before we can freely give Him His due. Those rights are manifold in their sweet reasonableness; but amongst them all, this of creation is one of the chief. God has a right to us because He has made us." (Meyer)

ii. "Of course, if we do not need God as our Creator, then we do not need to be thankful. Why should we? We got here by ourselves, thank you. We have no one but ourselves to thank." (Boice)

iii. Under the New Covenant, the believer has a second and greater reason for praise: he or she is a *new creation* in Jesus Christ (2Co 5:17).

iv. **And not we ourselves**: "Therefore we owe him homage and service, and him only, and not other gods, who made us not." (Poole)

v. "For our part, we find it far more easy to believe that the Lord made us than that we were developed

by a long chain of natural selections from floating atoms which fashioned themselves." (Spurgeon)

vi. "Some men live as if they made themselves; they call themselves '*self-made* men,' and they adore their supposed creators." (Spurgeon)

c. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture:

The third reason to worship God is because He has chosen a **people** (originally the Jewish people, then added the followers of Jesus Christ), and He cares for us as **the sheep of His pasture**.

B. The what and why of giving thanks.

1. (4) *What to do: Come to His house with thanks and praise.*

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,

And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

a. **Enter into His gates with thanksgiving:** Now the psalmist pictures the people of God from *all you lands* (verse 1) entering through the **gates** and into the **courts** of the temple. As God's people approach, we should do so **with thanksgiving**, recognizing how much God has done for us.

i. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving:

"Publicly worship God; and when ye come to the house of prayer, be thankful that you have such a privilege; and when you *enter his courts*, praise him for the permission." (Clarke)

ii. "It teaches that there is a special aspect of thanksgiving that involves the whole people of God together and not just the private prayers of individuals." (Boice)

b. **Into His courts with praise:** Thanks and **praise** merge together, as God's people are **thankful** and **bless His name**.

i. "It is as though the gates of the City, the courts of the Sanctuary, were suddenly thrown open, and all lands are called to *serve* Jehovah, to *know* that He is God, to *enter* into relationship with Him." (Morgan)

ii. Under the New Covenant, not only are the **gates** and **courts** open, but even the way to the Holy of Holies is thrown open (Heb 10:19).

2. (5) *Why to do it: God is good and merciful.*

For the LORD is good;
His mercy is everlasting,
And His truth endures to all generations.

a. **For the LORD is good:** Thanks and praise are right in recognition of God's *goodness*. He is good in His plans, good in His grace, good in His forgiveness, good in His covenant, and good in every aspect of His being.

i. **For the LORD is good:** "The gods of the heathen were not good. They were selfish and capricious. You could never know when they might turn against you and do you harm. Not so our God. The God of the Bible is and has always been good." (Boice)

b. **His mercy is everlasting:** The brief psalm ends with God's unending **mercy** and **truth**. These are **everlasting** reasons to give thanks and praise to God.

i. "So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks." (Spurgeon)

ii. "How glorious will be that day which shall behold the everlasting gates of heaven lifting up their heads, and disclosing to view those courts above, into which the children of the resurrection are to enter, there,

with angels and archangels, to dwell and sing forevermore!" (Horne)

I Will Walk with Integrity

Psa 101:1 My song is about loyalty and justice, and I sing it to you, O LORD.

Psa 101:2 My conduct will be faultless. When will you come to me? I will live a pure life in my house

Psa 101:3 and will never tolerate evil. I hate the actions of those who turn away from God; I will have nothing to do with them.

Psa 101:4 I will not be dishonest and will have no dealings with evil.

Psa 101:5 I will get rid of anyone who whispers evil things about someone else; I will not tolerate anyone who is proud and arrogant.

Psa 101:6 I will approve of those who are faithful to God and will let them live in my palace. Those who are completely honest will be allowed to serve me.

Psa 101:7 No liar will live in my palace; no hypocrite will remain in my presence.

Psa 101:8 Day after day I will destroy the wicked in our land; I will expel all who are evil from the city of the LORD.

Psalms 101:1-8

Psalms 101 – A King's Determination to Rule Righteously

*This psalm is titled **A Psalm of David**. Alexander Maclaren described a likely background for this psalm: "He had but recently ascended the throne. The abuses and confusions of Saul's last troubled years had to be reformed. The new king felt that he was God's viceroy; and here declares what he will strive to make his monarchy – a copy of God's."*

David was anointed king three times. Samuel anointed David in his youth, really as a prophecy of his calling and destiny (1Sa 16:13). After Saul's death he was anointed king over the tribe of Judah at Hebron (2Sa 2:4). Seven years later he was anointed king over all the tribes of Israel (2Sa 5:3). Before he took the throne over all Israel, he had a lot of time to think about what kind of king he should be.

"In Europe the psalm came to be known as the 'prince's psalm,' owing to the concern for the proper conduct of a Christian magistrate, prince, or king." (Willem VanGemeren)

"I was startled to find that Martin Luther had done an exposition of the psalm that ran to eighty pages. The reason, I discovered, is that he was deeply concerned about civil government and wanted to expound the psalm as a listing of qualities toward which every Christian prince or magistrate should strive." (James Montgomery Boice)

"Eyring, in his 'Life of Ernest the Pious' (Duke of Saxe-Gotha), relates that he sent an unfaithful minister a copy of the 101st Psalm, and that it became a proverb in the country when an official had done anything wrong, he would certainly soon receive the prince's Psalm to read." (Franz Delitzsch, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. Determined in his personal conduct.

1. (1) The song to sing.

**I will sing of mercy and justice;
To You, O LORD, I will sing praises.**

a. **I will sing of mercy and justice:** David sang this song exalting the **mercy and justice** of God. The two go together; **mercy** can only be properly understood in light of **justice**. When **justice** pronounces its righteous penalty, **mercy** may grant relief.

i. As king, David was concerned with **mercy and justice**. He knew these principles were not rooted in

man, but in God. Before he could exercise **mercy and justice** in His kingdom, he had to understand and extol the **mercy and justice** of God.

ii. "Mercy and judgment would temper the administration of David, because he had adoringly perceived them in the dispensations of his God." (Spurgeon)

iii. "His mercy encourageth the greatest of sinners to hope; his judgments forbid the best of men to presume." (Horne)

b. **To You, O LORD, I will sing praises:** David could only sing of **mercy and justice** in reference to songs of praise to Yahweh. David knew that the LORD was the source of all **mercy and justice**.

2. (2) *A righteous life and the presence of God.*

I will behave wisely in a perfect way.

Oh, when will You come to me?

I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

a. **I will behave wisely in a perfect way:** David's longing for the LORD was connected to his desire to live a wise and holy life (**perfect way**). He determined that his reign would be marked by integrity and godliness.

i. As David came into a position of greater power, it was all the more important that he focus on personal godliness and **behave wisely in a perfect way**. Power often exposes the flaws of character, if it does not actually help create them.

ii. "He begins with himself. He will bring his own character and conduct into conformity with the way and will of Jehovah to Whom he offers his praise. Then he will govern according to the same standards." (Morgan)

iii. When David came to royal power, he didn't say:

- "Now I can live the good life." He said, **I will behave wisely.**
- "I'll have the biggest party ever." He said, **I will behave wisely.**
- "I'll show them all how important I am." He said, **I will behave wisely.**
- "I'll punish my enemies and show my power." He said, **I will behave wisely.**

b. **When will You come to me?** David understood that under the Old Covenant blessing, including the experience of God's presence, was connected to obedience (Deuteronomy 28).

i. "He feels the need not merely of divine help, but also of the divine presence, that so he may be instructed, and sanctified, and made fit for the discharge of his high vocation. David longed for a more special and effectual visitation from the *Lord* before he began his reign." (Spurgeon)

ii. David understood the principle later stated in 1Jn 1:6-7 in connection with the New Covenant: *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

c. **I will walk within my house with a perfect heart:** David's righteous life had to be real in his conduct **within** his own **house** before it could be lived in the courts of his kingdom. This was a standard that David only imperfectly lived, much to his own hurt.

i. **Within my house:** "I will begin the intended reformation at myself, and then set things to rights in my family." (Trapp)

ii. "No man is able to make the city in which he dwells anything like the city of God who does not know how to behave himself in his own house.... The first thing for every public man to do who would serve his city for God, is to see to it that his private life is ordered aright before Him." (Morgan)

iii. "Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber? Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed." (Spurgeon)

iv. "This is the hardest place to walk in perfectly. It seems easier to walk perfectly among strangers than in one's own house. But you may rest assured that a man is really no better than he is to his own. You must not gauge your worth by what the outside world thinks and says." (Meyer)

v. "It is easier for most men to walk with a perfect heart in the *Church*, or even in the *world*, than in their *own families*. How many are as meek as lambs among *others*, when at *home* they are *wasps* or *tigers*!" (Clarke)

vi. "Understand that in the home-life God is educating and training you for the greatest victories. There you are learning the deepest lessons in sanctification. You need not run to conventions, sermons, and holiness meetings; if you would resolve to walk in your house with a perfect heart, you would discover how far from perfect you are, and how you are the least of His saints." (Meyer)

3. (3-4) *Describing the righteous life.*

**I will set nothing wicked before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;
It shall not cling to me.
A perverse heart shall depart from me;
I will not know wickedness.**

a. **I will set nothing wicked before my eyes:** David knew that one measure of his righteous life was what he chose to set **before** his **eyes**. There are many **wicked** things to **set** the **eyes** upon, and the *lust of the eyes* is a significant aspect of the lure of this world (1Jn 2:16).

i. David's words remind us of Job 31:1 : *I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?* Like Job, David regarded discipline over the eyes as a primary measure of godliness.

ii. "The recesses of an Eastern palace were often foul with lust, and hid extravagances of caprice and self-indulgence; but this ruler will behave there as one who has Jehovah for a guest." (Maclaren)

iii. We wish that David had lived this principle more consistently. Instead, David took multiple wives (2Sa 3:2-5; 2Sa 5:13) in a seeming inability to restrain his sexual desires, and was led astray by the lust of his eyes (2Sa 11:2).

iv. Yet, we shouldn't think David was a hypocrite because he failed in completely living up to these high standards. It isn't hypocrisy to have a standard that you can't completely meet. Hypocrisy is when you have one standard for yourself and a higher standard for others.

b. **I hate the work of those who fall away:** David knew that if he wanted to live a godly life, it would be wise to keep some distance from those with **a perverse**

heart. He knew what would be later stated in 1Co 15:33 : *Evil company corrupts good habits.*

- i. Boice explained the idea behind **those who fall away**: "It is the exact opposite of the 'covenant love' (*hesed*) idea introduced in verse 1."
 - ii. **It shall not cling to me**: "Sin, like pitch, is very apt to stick." (Spurgeon)
- c. **I will not know wickedness**: David knew that a righteous life must have some sense of *determination* about it. Though he did not perfectly fulfill this determination, his life was undeniably more godly *with* this determination than *without* it.
- i. **A perverse heart**: "The *perverseness* of verse 4 is more deliberate: a twisted mind and will which hate the plain truth and the straight path." (Kidner)
 - ii. "It is used of an unruly horse, that champs upon the bit through his fiery impatience; and when applied to a bad man, denotes one impatient of all restraint, of unbridled passions, and that is headstrong and ungovernable in the gratification of them, trampling on all the obligations of religion and virtue." (Chandler, cited in Spurgeon)

B. Determined in those he would appoint.

1. (5) *Opposing the workers of wickedness.*

**Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,
Him I will destroy;
The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart,
Him I will not endure.**

- a. **Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor**: It is a significant and grievous sin to lie or speak in an evil way against another. The worst of this slander is done

secretly, and David was determined to oppose all who did so (**Him I will destroy**).

i. The one who **secretly slanders his neighbor** seek "to advance themselves by the ruin of others; which are the common pests of courts and kingdoms." (Poole)

ii. **Slanders his neighbor**: Clarke noted a Chaldean translation of this and its meaning: "'He who speaks with the *triple tongue* against his neighbour.' That is, the tongue by which he slays *three* persons, viz., 1. The *man* whom he slanders; 2.

Him to whom he *communicates* the slander; and, 3. *Himself*, the slanderer. Every slanderer has his *triple tongue*, and by every *slander* inflicts those *three* deadly wounds."

b. **The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart**: David listed two additional related sins: the communication of arrogance by the facial expression (the **haughty look**) and the **proud heart** behind the expression. To all such who thought themselves better than their neighbors, David said "**Him I will not endure**."

i. **A haughty look**: "Pride will sit and show itself in the eyes as soon as anywhere." (Trapp)

2. (6-8) *The men David would choose to serve with him.*

My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land,

That they may dwell with me;

He who walks in a perfect way,

He shall serve me.

He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house;

He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence.

Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land,

That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.

a. **My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land:** David refused to look to or at those who thought themselves better than others. Instead he looked at **the faithful**, deciding that they would **dwell** with him.

i. When David looked for leaders, he looked for **the faithful of the land**. "We need people who can get the job done, but we need 'the faithful of the land' to do it. It is a wise leader who seeks out such people and then puts authority into their hands" (Boice)

ii. "Is it not true that Jesus, like David, has his eyes alert for the faithful in the land, for those who will serve now and also dwell with him in glory at the end of time?" (Boice)

b. **He shall serve me:** Perhaps David spoke this as he came to the throne, vowing to find the right people to appoint to his government. He would reject one **who works deceit** and **he who tells lies**. He would look for the humble, not the proud – knowing they were much better to trust with authority and responsibility.

c. **Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land:** David's determination to rule in such a way that favored the godly and opposed the wicked was so fixed that he was determined to do it **early**. As he ruled in **the city of the LORD**, the wicked would not prosper.

i. "The commitment to excellence implies a difference in administration from the manner in which kings ruled in the ancient Near East. The godly king affirms that his loyalty is to Yahweh and not to the ways of this world." (VanGemeren)

ii. **From the city of the LORD:** "His ambition is to have Jehovah's city worthy of its true King, when He

shall deign to come and dwell in it." (Maclaren)

iii. "The psalm is doubly moving: both for the ideals it discloses and for the shadow of failure which history throws across it. Happily the last word is not with David nor with his faithful historians, but with his Son. There, there is no shadow." (Kidner)

Do Not Hide Your Face from Me

Psa 102:1 Listen to my prayer, O LORD, and hear my cry for help!

Psa 102:2 When I am in trouble, don't turn away from me! Listen to me, and answer me quickly when I call!

Psa 102:3 My life is disappearing like smoke; my body is burning like fire.

Psa 102:4 I am beaten down like dry grass; I have lost my desire for food.

Psa 102:5 I groan aloud; I am nothing but skin and bones.

Psa 102:6 I am like a wild bird in the desert, like an owl in abandoned ruins.

Psa 102:7 I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird on a housetop.

Psa 102:8 All day long my enemies insult me; those who mock me use my name in cursing.

Psa 102:9 (9-10) Because of your anger and fury, ashes are my food, and my tears are mixed with my drink. You picked me up and threw me away.

Psa 102:11 My life is like the evening shadows; I am like dry grass.

Psa 102:12 But you, O LORD, are king forever; all generations will remember you.

Psa 102:13 You will rise and take pity on Zion; the time has come to have mercy on her; this is the right time.

Psa 102:14 Your servants love her, even though she is destroyed; they have pity on her, even though she is in ruins.

Psa 102:15 The nations will fear the LORD; all the kings of the earth will fear his power.

Psa 102:16 When the LORD rebuilds Zion, he will reveal his greatness.

Psa 102:17 He will hear his forsaken people and listen to their prayer.

Psa 102:18 Write down for the coming generation what the LORD has done, so that people not yet born will praise him.

Psa 102:19 The LORD looked down from his holy place on high, he looked down from heaven to earth.

Psa 102:20 He heard the groans of prisoners and set free those who were condemned to die.

Psa 102:21 And so his name will be proclaimed in Zion, and he will be praised in Jerusalem

Psa 102:22 when nations and kingdoms come together and worship the LORD.

Psa 102:23 The LORD has made me weak while I am still young; he has shortened my life.

Psa 102:24 O God, do not take me away now before I grow old. O LORD, you live forever;

Psa 102:25 long ago you created the earth, and with your own hands you made the heavens.

Psa 102:26 They will disappear, but you will remain; they will all wear out like clothes. You will discard them like clothes, and they will vanish.

Psa 102:27 But you are always the same, and your life never ends.

Psa 102:28 Our children will live in safety, and under your protection their descendants will be secure.

Psalms 102:1-28

Psalms 102 – Afflicted, But Full of Trust

*The title of this psalm is **A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD**. This afflicted one borrowed his tone and some of his phrasing from Job, who is the Old Testament's greatest example of affliction. Many phrases also match others in the psalms.*

This psalm describes Jerusalem (Zion) in a state of ruin. If this is taken as literal ruin, the psalm may have been written by those in exile who mourned over both their personal and national affliction. Adam Clarke followed this thinking and suggested the author could be Daniel, Jeremiah, or Nehemiah. However, it may be that the ruin of Zion described is more poetic in nature and the psalm is pre-exilic.

In traditional Christian liturgy, this has been regarded as one of the seven penitential psalms (along with Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 130, , 143).

A. A cry from the crisis.

1. (1-2) A plea for the presence of God.

Hear my prayer, O LORD,

And let my cry come to You.

Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble;

Incline Your ear to me;

In the day that I call, answer me speedily.

a. **Hear my prayer, O LORD:** According to its title, this psalm comes from an anonymous afflicted one. The psalmist begs for God to **hear** his prayer, knowing that a good and compassionate God could not **hear** but still ignore his plea.

i. The first two verses of this psalm are filled with phrases that allude to other psalms (VanGemenen cites seven such phrases). "But the psalmist is not a cold-blooded compiler, weaving a web from old threads, but a suffering man...securing a certain solace by reiterating familiar petitions." (Maclaren)

b. **Do not hide Your face:** The affliction itself was bad enough, but it was made worse beyond measure by the sense that God did not see or care. When he had the sense that God's favor and face were evident, the affliction could be endured.

2. (3-7) *The agony of being afflicted in health.*

**For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burned like a hearth.
My heart is stricken and withered like grass,
So that I forget to eat my bread.
Because of the sound of my groaning
My bones cling to my skin.
I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am like an owl of the desert.
I lie awake,
And am like a sparrow alone on the housetop.**

a. **For my days are consumed like smoke:** In a style similar to Job, the psalmist described his agony. His days passed like meaningless **smoke**. Pain from deep inside his body made his **bones** feel as if they were burning. His **heart** ached and he had no appetite.

i. "**Like smoke;** which passeth away in obscurity, and swiftly, and irrecoverably." (Poole)

ii. "The effects of extreme grief on the human frame are compared to those which fire produceth upon fuel. It exhausts the radical moisture, and, by so doing, soon consumes the substance." (Horne)

iii. **I forget to eat my bread:** "Ahab, smitten with one kind of grief, David with another, and Daniel with a third, all 'forgot,' or 'refused to eat their bread:' 1Ki 21:4, 2Sa 12:16; Dan 10:3. Such natural companions are 'mourning and fasting.'" (Horne)

b. **My bones cling to my skin:** As in Job 19:20, he was so weak and thin that there seemed to be nothing between his **bones** and his **skin**. He felt like a lonely and restless bird (**pelican, owl, or sparrow**).

i. "**Pelican;** or, *bittern*, as the same word is translated, Isa 34:11, Zep 2:14. It is a solitary and mournful bird, as also the owl here following is." (Poole)

ii. **Pelican, owl:** "The Psalmist likens himself to two birds which were commonly used as emblems of gloom and wretchedness." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Sparrow:** "But this Hebrew word doth not only signify a sparrow, but in general *any bird*, as Lev 14:4, Deu 14:11, Dan 4:12; Dan 4:14; Dan 4:21. And so it may here design any one or more sort of birds which used to sit alone, watching and mourning upon house-tops." (Poole)

3. (8-11) *The agony of being afflicted by enemies.*

**My enemies reproach me all day long;
Those who deride me swear an oath against me.
For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping,
Because of Your indignation and Your wrath;
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.
My days are like a shadow that lengthens,
And I wither away like grass.**

a. **My enemies reproach me all day long:** The psalmist's affliction came from more than poor health; he

had **enemies** set against him. They opposed him with constant disapproval and rejection. They added a tone of mocking and cursing (**who deride me and swear an oath against me**).

i. "The scoffs and reproaches of men are generally added to the chastisements of God; or rather, perhaps are a part, and sometimes the bitterest part of them." (Horne)

ii. **Swear an oath against me:** "Have sworn my death, or do swear and curse by me." (Trapp)

b. **I have eaten ashes like bread:** The life of the psalmist seemed to be constant mourning. The marks of mourning – **ashes** and **weeping** were as familiar to him as food and drink.

c. **Because of Your indignation and Your wrath:** The mourning was all the more bitter because of the sense that this affliction came as some kind of punishment from God.

i. **You have lifted me up and cast me away:** "He felt that God was treating him as wrestlers treat one another, when a man deliberately lifts up his opponent in order that he may give him the worse fall." (Spurgeon)

d. **I wither away like grass:** Overwhelmed with a sense of divine rejection (**You have lifted me up and cast me away**), he felt that his life was short and had little meaning.

i. **A shadow that lengthens:** "A 'shadow' never continueth in one stay, but is still gliding imperceptibly on, lengthening as it goes, and at last vanishing into darkness." (Horne)

ii. "Here, to the twelfth verse, is a most lively picture of a dejected person, such as can hardly be

paralleled." (Trapp)

B. Praising the LORD who builds up Zion.

1. (12) Recognizing the everlasting God.

**But You, O LORD, shall endure forever,
And the remembrance of Your name to all
generations.**

a. **But You, O LORD, shall endure forever:** The previous lines spoke of the psalmist's frailty and the fleeting nature of life. The present line gives a sharp and wonderful contrast. Man may have days like shadows or *wither away like grass*, but Yahweh **shall endure forever**. The psalmist can therefore reject all self-reliance and hold on to a true reliance upon God.

i. We note the contrast between the first 11 verses, which were filled with personal references (I, me, and my) and verses 12 and following. With the words, **but You**, the focus changes and is set on God.

ii. "This, then, is the light which banishes darkness – the sense of the eternity of God. Then all life is seen as being under His control, and therefore conditioned in the wisdom and intention which include far more than the passing moment, taking into account all the ages." (Morgan)

b. **The remembrance of Your name to all generations:** Not only would the Lord Himself endure, but His influence and greatness would be declared **to all generations**, never passing away.

2. (13-14) Recognizing the favor of God to Jerusalem.

**You will arise *and* have mercy on Zion;
For the time to favor her,
Yes, the set time, has come.**

**For Your servants take pleasure in her stones,
And show favor to her dust.**

a. **You will arise and have mercy on Zion:** Though in deep affliction, the psalmist had steadfast confidence that God *would* act and show **mercy** to Jerusalem once again.

b. **Yes, the set time, has come:** At God's appointed time, Jerusalem would be the object of God's **favor**. He had a **set time** for their restoration and would not forever leave them in ruin.

i. If this psalm describes the time in exile, **the set time** points to the 70 years set by God for Israel's captivity (Jer 25:11-13; Jer 29:10).

ii. "There was an appointed time for the Jews in Babylon, and when the weeks were fulfilled, no bolts nor bars could longer imprison the ransomed of the Lord." (Spurgeon)

c. **Your servants take pleasure in her stones:** It is in our nature to reject that which is broken or torn down, but God's **servants** have a love that goes beyond human nature. They see the ruined city, **take pleasure in her stones** and **show favor to her dust**.

i. The psalmist was overwhelmed by a sense of his *own* ruin and need (Psa 102:1-11). Yet he did not allow that to turn him completely inward; he also cared for his community.

ii. "When the people of God cease thinking about themselves so much and begin thinking about the state of things around them, particularly our cities and those who are suffering in them, then God may indeed hear our prayers and send a revival." (Boice)

iii. If every stone of God's city was precious to His **servants**, then by analogy, so is every stone representing the people of God in His great building

(1Pe 2:5). "The poorest church member, the most grievous backslider, the most ignorant convert, should be precious in our sight, because [they form]... a part, although possibly a very feeble part, of the new Jerusalem." (Spurgeon)

3. (15-17) Recognizing God's exaltation among the nations.

**So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD,
And all the kings of the earth Your glory.
For the LORD shall build up Zion;
He shall appear in His glory.
He shall regard the prayer of the destitute,
And shall not despise their prayer.**

a. So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD:

The restoration of mercy to Jerusalem is only the first part of a much larger work among **the nations**. God would so reveal Himself that **all the kings of the earth** would honor His name and glory.

b. He shall appear in His glory: The kings and kingdoms of the world honor Yahweh because He reveals Himself in His work toward Zion. His blessing and mercy to Jerusalem are a foretaste of His goodness to all the earth, when **He shall regard the prayer of the destitute**.

i. "A wondering world will adore her delivering God." (Maclaren)

ii. **The prayer of the destitute:** "Only the poorest of the people were left to sigh and cry among the ruins of the beloved city; as for the rest, they were strangers in a strange land, and far away from the holy place, yet the prayers of the captives and the forlorn offscourings of the land would be heard of the Lord." (Spurgeon)

4. (18-22) Recognizing the great deliverance God brings.

**This will be written for the generation to come,
That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary;
From heaven the LORD viewed the earth,
To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To release those appointed to death,
To declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
And His praise in Jerusalem,
When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.**

a. **This will be written for the generation to come:**
God's goodness to Zion and the whole earth is a testimony for the future, so that **a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.**

i. **This will be written:** "This wonderful deliverance shall not be lost nor forgotten, but carefully recorded by thy people." (Poole)

ii. "Registers of divine kindness ought to be made and preserved: we write down in history the calamities of nations – wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are recorded; how much rather then should we set up memorials of the Lord's lovingkindnesses!" (Spurgeon)

iii. "Nothing is more tenacious than man's memory when he suffers an injury; nothing more lax if a benefit is conferred. For this reason God desires lest his gifts should fall out of mind, to have them committed to writing." (Le Blanc, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. The idea that God considers and plans for those **yet to be created** is an interesting revelation. We don't first enter into the consciousness of God when we are conceived in our mother's womb, but when we are conceived in His heart and mind.

b. **He looked down from the height of His sanctuary:** The psalmist pictured God bending down low from heaven:

- To see (**viewed the earth**).
- To hear (**the groaning of the prisoner**).
- To act (**to release those appointed to death**).
- To proclaim (**the name of the LORD in Zion**).
- To gather (**when the peoples are gathered together**).
- To receive service (**peoples are gathered...to serve the LORD**).

i. Horne took these words and made them into a fit prayer for the afflicted believer today: "Look down, O Lord Jesu, yet once again upon thy servants, still under the dominion of death, and the bondage of corruption; loose these chains, even these also, O Lord, and bring us forth into the glorious liberty of thy children."

C. The weakness of man and the strength of God.

1. (23) *A confession of weakness and its cause.*

**He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days.**

a. **He weakened my strength in the way:** The psalmist began this song by recognizing his own weakness (verses 1-11). Then he praised God for His deliverance and ultimate victory (verses 12-22). Now in the last section of this psalm, he confessed once again his weakness and frailty (**shortened my days**).

b. **He weakened...He shortened:** In addition, the psalmist recognized that it was *God* who either caused or allowed his weakness and frailty. Here the psalmist wrote with a point much like that of the much later Apostle Paul, who saw God's plan and even glory in his present weakness (2Co 12:9-10).

2. (24-28) *A prayer from the afflicted psalmist.*

**I said, "O my God,
Do not take me away in the midst of my days;
Your years *are* throughout all generations.
Of old You laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens *are* the work of Your hands.
They will perish, but You will endure;
Yes, they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will change them,
And they will be changed.**

**But You are the same,
And Your years will have no end.
The children of Your servants will continue,
And their descendants will be established before
You."**

a. **O my God, do not take me away:** Overwhelmed by both his sense of great weakness in affliction, and by the awareness of God's greatness and ultimate victory, the psalmist did the right thing. He cried out in prayer, pleading for God's merciful help.

b. **Of old You laid the foundation of the earth:** Verses 25-27 are quoted in Heb 1:10-12 as the words of God the Father unto God the Son, the Messiah.

i. In the Hebrew text of verses 25-27, the psalmist says this to Yahweh, but the idea that God Himself speaks these words is more clear in the Greek translation of the Hebrew (the Septuagint), which the author of Hebrews quoted.

ii. "The epistle opens our eyes to what would otherwise be brought out only by the Septuagint of verses 23f....namely that the Father is here replying to the Son, 'through whom all things were made'." (Kidner)

iii. "The writer of the Epistle is not asserting that the psalmist consciously spoke of the Messiah, but he is declaring that his words, read in the light of history, point to Jesus as the crowning manifestation of the redeeming, and therefore necessarily of the creating, God." (Maclaren)

iv. "When the psalmist wrote these words he was thinking of God the Father, as he has been throughout the psalm. There is very little intimation of the Trinity or the person of the Son of God in the

Old Testament. Still, the author of Hebrews is right when he views these words as spoken by the Father to Jesus Christ." (Boice)

c. **They will perish, but You will endure:** The contrast was clear to the psalmist. The mighty God is eternal (**throughout all generations**) and can do all things (**You laid the foundation of the earth**). The things God creates may **perish**, but He Himself **will endure**.

i. "Did He make all things? Then He can unmake them, and be Himself evermore the same." (Meyer)

ii. "There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the heart in suffering, or inspire the spirit with the courage in days of danger and difficulty, than the sense of the eternity of God.... Let us set our limitations always in the light of His limitlessness." (Morgan)

d. **You will change them:** God has complete power over creation, including the power to **change** the heavens as He pleases. Yet He Himself is unchanging (**You are the same**) and eternal (**Your years will have no end**).

i. "Amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life, one topic of consolation will ever remain, namely, the eternity and immutability of God our Saviour, of him who was, and is, and is to come." (Horne)

e. **The children of Your servants will continue:** The psalmist ended his prayer and this psalm with a note of confidence, even triumph. His affliction seems to have remained, and he does not proclaim hope for his present trouble. At the same time, he is utterly confident of God's goodness and ultimate victory for His people (**Your servants**). If the psalmist did not see it in his own day,

his **children** surely would, **and their descendants will be established** by God's goodness and strength.

i. This is a remarkable declaration of trust in God's promise to make all things right and good, if not in the present day, then in days to come. It shows a wonderful progression in this psalm.

- He began with an honest declaration of his own misery.
- Then he looked outside himself to his community.
- Then he looked outside his community to the world.
- Then he looked outside his time to future generations.

ii. "It is remarkable that the psalmist does not draw the conclusion that he himself shall receive an answer to his prayer, but that 'the children of Thy servants shall dwell' *i.e.*, in the land, and that there will always be an Israel 'established before Thee.'" (Maclaren)

iii. "Whatever be the fate of the present generation, whether they may live to see the accomplishment of all that has been foretold or not, yet the word of God standeth sure; there shall be always a church, and a holy seed, to whom the promises shall be made good." (Horne)

Bless the Lord, O My Soul

Psa 103:1 Praise the LORD, my soul! All my being, praise his holy name!

Psa 103:2 Praise the LORD, my soul, and do not forget how kind he is.

Psa 103:3 He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.

Psa 103:4 He keeps me from the grave and blesses me with love and mercy.

Psa 103:5 He fills my life with good things, so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.

Psa 103:6 The LORD judges in favor of the oppressed and gives them their rights.

Psa 103:7 He revealed his plans to Moses and let the people of Israel see his mighty deeds.

Psa 103:8 The LORD is merciful and loving, slow to become angry and full of constant love.

Psa 103:9 He does not keep on rebuking; he is not angry forever.

Psa 103:10 He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us according to our sins and wrongs.

Psa 103:11 As high as the sky is above the earth, so great is his love for those who honor him.

Psa 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us.

Psa 103:13 As a father is kind to his children, so the LORD is kind to those who honor him.

Psa 103:14 He knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust.

Psa 103:15 As for us, our life is like grass. We grow and flourish like a wild flower;

Psa 103:16 then the wind blows on it, and it is gone—no one sees it again.

Psa 103:17 But for those who honor the LORD, his love lasts forever, and his goodness endures for all generations

Psa 103:18 of those who are true to his covenant and who faithfully obey his commands.

Psa 103:19 The LORD placed his throne in heaven; he is king over all.

Psa 103:20 Praise the LORD, you strong and mighty angels, who obey his commands, who listen to what he says.

Psa 103:21 Praise the LORD, all you heavenly powers, you servants of his, who do his will!

Psa 103:22 Praise the LORD, all his creatures in all the places he rules. Praise the LORD, my soul! Praise the LORD, my soul!

Psalms 103:1-22

Psalms 103 – Bless the LORD, O My Soul

*This psalm is simply titled **A Psalm of David**. We don't know the circumstances in which it was written, but since David was a man who knew the grace and deliverance of God many times, it could have been written at many different times of his life.*

However, Charles Spurgeon thought, "We should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because a keener sense of sin, than in his younger days. His clear sense of the frailty of life indicates his weaker years, as also does the very fulness of his praiseful gratitude." (Charles Spurgeon)

"It is perhaps the most perfect song of pure praise to be found in the Bible.... Through centuries it has been sung by glad hearts, and today is as fresh and full of beauty as ever." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. Reasons to bless and honor God.

1. (1-2) Blessing God for all His benefits.

**Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:**

- a. **Bless the LORD:** David did not mean this in the sense that a greater person bestows a blessing on a lesser person. God is infinitely greater than man, and

man could never give a blessing to God. David meant this in the sense that it blesses and honors God when His creatures praise Him and thank Him appropriately.

b. **Bless the LORD, O my soul:** David called upon his **soul** to bless Yahweh. It was as if David looked at his soul and understood that it was not praising God enough. He called upon his **soul** to do more.

i. David understood that true worship was something deeply inward, of the **soul**. It is not just about outward forms or expressions, but also about something real from the **soul**. "Soul music is the very soul of music." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Let others murmur, but do thou *bless*. Let others bless themselves and their idols, but do thou bless *the Lord*. Let others use only their tongues, but as for me I will cry, 'Bless the Lord, O my *soul*.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **All that is within me, bless His holy name:** David also understood that worship had to be more than superficial; it had to be offered as completely as possible. He wanted *everything* **within** to praise God. He set his heart in tune as well as setting his instruments in tune.

i. We often praise and thank God halfheartedly – or less! David called for *everything* within him (**all that is within me**) to give honor and praise to God.

ii. **All that is within me:** "What a rebuke to much of what passes for praise in our assemblies. We come to church, but we leave our minds at home. We hear of God's grace, but our hearts have been hardened by a critical and carping spirit." (Boice)

iii. "The singer addresses himself. He realizes that he has power over himself, that he is able to give or to withhold that which is due to God." (Morgan)

iv. "The one value of these opening words is that they show us that worship is not involuntary, automatic. It calls for the coordination of all our powers.... The sanctuary is not a lounge, a place of relaxation. We should enter it with all the powers of personality arrested, arranged, dedicated. Then we may render a service of praise that is worthy and acceptable." (Morgan)

v. **Bless His holy name:** "Only a holy man can delight in holy things. Holiness is the terror of unholy men; they love sin and count it liberty, but holiness is to them a slavery. If we be saints we shall bless God for his holiness." (Spurgeon)

d. **Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:** In the pattern of Hebrew poetry, David used repetition for emphasis. He then added an important idea – that this praise and honor to God should be given unto Him for *rational reasons*, not on the basis of mere emotion or excitement. True **benefits** are given by God unto His people, and we must not **forget** them. Instead, we should use the remembrance of those things as reasons to praise.

i. 2Ch 32:25 describes a king who *did* forget God's benefits, at least for a time: *But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem.*

ii. "Thanksgiving cannot be sincere and hearty, unless a man bear impressed upon his mind, at the time, a quick sense of 'benefits' received." (Horne)

iii. "Praise is the response of awe for God, while reflecting on what the Lord has done for the people of God throughout the history of redemption, for

creation at large, for the community, and for oneself.”
(VanGemeren)

2. (3-5) *Blessing God who redeems.*

**Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**

a. **Who forgives all your iniquities:** One of the great *benefits* mentioned in verse 3 is the forgiveness of **all** our sins. When the magnitude of our sin and the righteousness of God are understood, this forgiveness is a staggering reason for praising and honoring God.

i. This begins a series of great benefits God brings to His believing people. “He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Significantly, this is the benefit listed *first*. In David's mind, the most important thing was to have sins forgiven, even more important than physical healing.

iii. “The profound consciousness of sin, which it was one aim of the Law to evoke, underlies the psalmist's praise.” (Maclaren)

b. **Who heals all your diseases:** Another great benefit is God's care for our bodies. He brings healing to us in this life through both natural and miraculous ways. He promises ultimate healing for all His people in the age to come.

i. Many commentators understand these **diseases** as spiritual in nature. Horne described this thinking: "What is pride, but lunacy? What is lust, but a leprosy? What is sloth, but a dead palsy? Perhaps there are spiritual maladies similar to all [bodily] ones." While it is true that sin leads to spiritual illness, here David seems to refer to physical **diseases**.

ii. "Some suggest that David is speaking about spiritual illness, such as the burdens of sin. But that is not it. I think he really is speaking of diseases. He is saying that when we are healed, as we often are, it is God who has done it. He is the healer of the body as well as of the soul. Therefore, such health as we have been given is a sure gift from God. God should be praised for it." (Boice)

c. **Who redeems your life from destruction:** Many know the powerful blessing of God's rescue from sure **destruction**. Many calamities are spared the child of God, whether he knows it or not.

i. **Who redeems:** "Preservation from destruction, *haggoel*, properly, *redemption of life by the kinsman*; possibly looking forward, in the spirit of prophecy, to him who became partaker of our flesh and blood, that he might have the right to redeem our souls from death by dying in our stead." (Clarke)

d. **Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies:** God's greatness extends beyond sparing us from sin, disease, or trouble. Through God's blessing, we are crowned with His great love and mercy.

e. **Who satisfies your mouth with good things:** The result of God's work, both in what He saves us from and what He saves us unto, is to bring true *satisfaction* to our lives. This is different from mere pleasure or entertainment; God wants to bring true satisfaction to

our lives from **good things**. This satisfaction becomes a source of strength and energy to His people (**your youth is renewed like the eagle's**).

i. "It is God who gives us the 'good things' of this world, and who giveth us likewise an appetite and a taste to enjoy them." (Horne)

ii. **Who satisfies**: "No man is ever filled to satisfaction but a believer, and only God himself can satisfy even him. Many a worldling is satiated, but not one is satisfied." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Your youth is renewed like the eagle's**: "The second line is not implying...that eagles have the power of self-renewal; only that God renews us to... the very picture of buoyant, tireless strength which Isa 40:30 f. takes up." (Kidner)

3. (6-7) *Blessing God who is righteous.*

**The LORD executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.
He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.**

a. **The LORD executes righteousness and justice**: In the previous section, David described the greatness of God in His work to the individual. Yet God also shows His greatness in bringing **righteousness and justice** to societies.

i. "Our own personal obligations must not absorb our song; we must also magnify the Lord for his goodness to others." (Spurgeon)

b. **He made known His ways**: Another aspect of God's greatness is His self-revelation. God could be content to hide Himself, but instead He wanted to make **known His way** and **His acts**.

4. (8-10) *Blessing God who is gracious.*

**The LORD is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He will not always strive *with us*,
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.**

a. **The LORD is merciful and gracious:** In the previous lines, David described the righteousness and justice of God. Those aspects of God's character are true, but so also are His mercy and graciousness. His **anger** comes, but slowly and after much **mercy** has been shown.

i. "All the world tastes of his sparing mercy, those who hear the gospel partake of his inviting mercy, the saints live by his saving mercy, are preserved by his upholding mercy, are cheered by his consoling mercy, and will enter heaven through his infinite and everlasting mercy." (Spurgeon)

b. **Abounding in mercy:** David's statements remind us of God's revelation of Himself to Moses in Exodus 34 : *The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth (Exo 34:6).*

i. **He will not always strive with us:** "These very human terms point the contrast between God's generosity and the heavy-handed wrath of man, who loves to keep his quarrels going (*chide* [**strive**] translates a term much used for disputes, especially at law) and to nurse his grievances." (Kidner)

c. **He has not dealt with us according to our sins:** David knew the slow anger and abounding mercy of God *personally*. He knew that his sins (and the sins of his

people) deserved much greater judgment or discipline than they had received.

i. "We ought to praise the Lord for what he has not done as well as for what he has wrought for us; even the negative side deserves our adoring gratitude."
(Spurgeon)

ii. "Why is it that God hath not dealt with us after our sins? Is it not because he hath dealt with another after our sins? Another who took our sins upon him."
(Baker, cited in Spurgeon)

5. (11-12) The greatness of God's gracious forgiveness.

**For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

a. **For as the heavens are high above the earth:** This is a description of the *abounding* mercy of God mentioned in verse 8. The distance from the earth to the heavens measures the greatness of His mercy **toward those who fear Him**. By instinct, we often think of God's mercy as *less* than it really is.

i. There were three concepts of heaven in the ancient Biblical world. The first heaven is the blue sky, the atmosphere with its sun. The second heaven is the night sky, the stars and constellations. The third heaven is the place where God dwells and is enthroned. It's interesting to wonder which of the three concepts of heaven David had in mind with this wonderful statement.

b. **As far as the east is from the west:** This is a description of the great forgiveness of God mentioned in verse 10. We have no idea if David knew the shape of the earth, but the Holy Spirit who inspired David to write

this did, and the nature of the earth and our way of describing directions makes this statement particularly inspiring.

i. **As far as the east is from the west** is much greater than saying *as far as the north is from the south*, **so far has He removed our transgressions from us**. If you travel north on a globe, you begin to travel south as soon as you go over the North Pole. But if you travel east, you will continue east forever. Given the true shape of the earth, **east** and **west** never meet – and this is how far God has removed our sins from us!

ii. "As the east and the west can never meet in one point, but be for ever at the same distance from each other, so our sins and their decreed punishment are removed to an eternal distance by his mercy."
(Clarke)

iii. "God loves us, and he will love us for ever. He loves us infinitely, and he could not love us more than if we had never fallen." (Spurgeon)

6. (13-14) *Blessing God who shows great sympathy.*

**As a father pities *his* children,
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.
For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we *are* dust.**

a. **The LORD pities those who fear Him:** David continues to describe the abounding mercy and goodness of God. The way that a good father cares for and even **pities his children** in their frailty and weakness, so the **LORD pities those who fear Him**.

i. We think of a loving father dealing with his tired children. He does not demand more of them than they can perform, but with care takes into account

their weaknesses. He comforts them and measures his expectations according to his wisdom and compassion.

ii. Spurgeon considered the many ways God may pity His children:

- He pities our childish ignorance.
- He pities our childish weakness.
- He pities our childish foolishness.
- He pities our childish naughtiness.
- He pities our childish stumbles and falls.
- He pities the pain of His children.
- He pities the child when another has wronged him.
- He pities the fears of His children.

iii. "It is in the present tense, and carries the idea of continuity: at this very moment he is now pitying them that fear him. Though he knows your trials will work for your good, yet he pities you. Though he knows that there is sin in you, which, perhaps, may require this rough discipline ere you be sanctified, yet he pities you. Though he can hear the music of heaven, the songs and glees that will ultimately come of your present sighs and griefs, yet still he pities those groans and wails of yours." (Spurgeon)

iv. "We may lose ourselves amid the amplitudes of the lofty, wide-stretching sky, but this emblem of paternal love goes straight to our hearts. A pitying God! What can be added to that?" (Maclaren)

v. The wise reaction to this is, **fear** *the LORD*! How much better to be on the side of His pity and compassion than to be on the side of His anger or righteous judgment!

b. **For He knows our frame:** The pity and compassion of God toward those who fear Him are rooted in His knowledge and understanding of our inherent weakness and impermanence, our transience.

i. "The word rendered 'frame' is literally, 'formation' or 'fashioning,' and comes from the same root as the verb employed in Gen 2:7 to describe man's creation. 'The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.' It is also used for the potter's action in moulding earthen vessels. (Isa 29:16, etc.) So, in the next clause, 'dust' carries on the allusion to Genesis, and the general idea conveyed is that of frailty." (Maclaren)

ii. "In all his conduct towards us he considers the frailty of our nature, the untowardness of our circumstances, the strength and subtlety of temptation, and the sure party (till the heart is renewed) that the tempter has within us." (Clarke)

iii. This **pity** and remembrance were turned to empathy at the incarnation. God Himself added humanity to His deity and experienced **our frame** and our **dust**-like weakness. What before He knew by observation, He submitted to know by *experience*.

B. Contrasts that display the greatness of God.

1. (15-18) *The contrast between man's moment and God's permanence.*

**As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.
But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,**

**And His righteousness to children's children,
To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to
do them.**

a. **As for man, his days are like grass:** David expanded the thought of man's weak frame and dust-like nature. Humanity is so transient that **his days are like grass** and like a **flower of the field** that blooms one day and withers the next. When the flower is gone, virtually nothing remains – **its place remembers it no more.**

i. **"A flower of the field;** which is more exposed to winds and other violences than the flowers of the garden, which are secured by the art and care of the gardener." (Poole)

ii. "The flower which faded in Adam, blooms anew in Christ, never to fade again." (Horne)

b. **But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting:** This is true of God's mercy and of God Himself, the source of mercy. His *hesed* – covenant love, loyal kindness – endures from all ages to all ages. **Those who fear Him** receive the benefit of this everlasting mercy, as do their **children's children.**

i. "God's love does not alter with our alterings, or change with our changes. Does the mother's love fluctuate with the moods of her sick babe?" (Meyer)

ii. "There never was a time when He did not love you. His mercy is from everlasting; nor a time when He will love you less – it is to everlasting." (Meyer)

c. **To such as keep His covenant:** These promises of everlasting love and mercy are given with conditions. The promises are made to **those who fear Him,** to

those who **keep His covenant**, and those who **remember His commandments to do them**.

2. (19) *The contrast between Yahweh and all creation.*

**The LORD has established His throne in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.**

a. **The LORD has established His throne in heaven:** David celebrated God's secure reign from heaven. God is enthroned **in heaven**, beyond the troubles and corruptions of earth. It is **established**, and will never be moved.

b. **And His kingdom rules over all:** An eternal contrast is made between the Ruler and the ruled. There is no aspect of the universe that is not under His reign.

i. "When Melancthon was extremely solicitous [worried] about the affairs of the church in his days, Luther would have him admonished in these terms, *Monendus est Philippus ut desinat esse rector mundi*, Let not Philip make himself any longer governor of the world." (Clarkson, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (20-22) *The contrast between God and His angels.*

**Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.
Bless the LORD, all *you* His hosts,
You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.
Bless the LORD, all His works,
In all places of His dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!**

a. **Bless the LORD, you His angels:** David began the psalm by telling his own soul to bless the Lord, but he knew the praise and honor to God should go beyond what he could give. It should extend all the way to the

angels, and David boldly told them to also **bless the LORD**.

b. **Who excel in strength, who do His word**: The angels are strong and obedient, but even they should **bless the LORD**, giving Him praise and honor.

c. **Bless the LORD, all you His hosts**: The angels also make up God's **hosts**: His heavenly army under His command **who do His pleasure**. As God's soldiers, they should give Him the honor and praise due to Him.

d. **Bless the LORD, all His works**: David extended the call to honor and praise God further than the angels to **all** of God's **works**, in **all places of His dominion**.

i. **All His works**: "His song is no solo, for all creation is singing – or will sing – with him; but his voice, like every other, has its own part to add, its own 'benefits' (2ff.) to celebrate, and its own access (cf.

Psa 5:3) to the attentive ear of God." (Kidner)

ii. "Man is but little, yet, placing his hands upon the keys of the great organ of the universe, he wakes it to thunders of adoration! Redeemed man is the voice of nature, the priest in the temple of creation, the precentor in the worship of the universe." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The 'my' of personal experience merges into the 'our' of social fellowship, thus culminates in the 'all' of universal consciousness." (Morgan)

e. **Bless the LORD, O my soul**: David ended the psalm as he began it, with a call to his own **soul** to bless God, giving Him the honor and praise due to Him. After the many reasons given in Psalms 103, David had *more* reasons to **bless the LORD** at the end of the psalm.

O Lord My God, You Are Very Great

Psa 104:1 O LORD, my God, how great you are! You are clothed with majesty and glory;

Psa 104:2 you cover yourself with light. You have spread out the heavens like a tent

Psa 104:3 and built your home on the waters above. You use the clouds as your chariot and ride on the wings of the wind.

Psa 104:4 You use the winds as your messengers and flashes of lightning as your servants.

Psa 104:5 You have set the earth firmly on its foundations, and it will never be moved.

Psa 104:6 You placed the ocean over it like a robe, and the water covered the mountains.

Psa 104:7 When you rebuked the waters, they fled; they rushed away when they heard your shout of command.

Psa 104:8 They flowed over the mountains and into the valleys, to the place you had made for them.

Psa 104:9 You set a boundary they can never pass, to keep them from covering the earth again.

Psa 104:10 You make springs flow in the valleys, and rivers run between the hills.

Psa 104:11 They provide water for the wild animals; there the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

Psa 104:12 In the trees near by, the birds make their nests and sing.

Psa 104:13 From the sky you send rain on the hills, and the earth is filled with your blessings.

Psa 104:14 You make grass grow for the cattle and plants for us to use, so that we can grow our crops

Psa 104:15 and produce wine to make us happy, olive oil to make us cheerful, and bread to give us strength.

Psa 104:16 The cedars of Lebanon get plenty of rain—the LORD's own trees, which he planted.

Psa 104:17 There the birds build their nests; the storks nest in the fir trees.

Psa 104:18 The wild goats live in the high mountains, and the rock badgers hide in the cliffs.

Psa 104:19 You created the moon to mark the months; the sun knows the time to set.

Psa 104:20 You made the night, and in the darkness all the wild animals come out.

Psa 104:21 The young lions roar while they hunt, looking for the food that God provides.

Psa 104:22 When the sun rises, they go back and lie down in their dens.

Psa 104:23 Then people go out to do their work and keep working until evening.

Psa 104:24 LORD, you have made so many things! How wisely you made them all! The earth is filled with your creatures.

Psa 104:25 There is the ocean, large and wide, where countless creatures live, large and small alike.

Psa 104:26 The ships sail on it, and in it plays Leviathan, that sea monster which you made.

Psa 104:27 All of them depend on you to give them food when they need it.

Psa 104:28 You give it to them, and they eat it; you provide food, and they are satisfied.

Psa 104:29 When you turn away, they are afraid; when you take away your breath, they die and go back to the dust from which they came.

Psa 104:30 But when you give them breath, they are created; you give new life to the earth.

Psa 104:31 May the glory of the LORD last forever! May the LORD be happy with what he has made!

Psa 104:32 He looks at the earth, and it trembles; he touches the mountains, and they pour out smoke.

Psa 104:33 I will sing to the LORD all my life; as long as I live I will sing praises to my God.

Psa 104:34 May he be pleased with my song, for my gladness comes from him.

Psa 104:35 May sinners be destroyed from the earth; may the wicked be no more. Praise the LORD, my soul! Praise the LORD!

Psalms 104:1-35

Psalms 104 – LORD of All Creation

"This Psalm has no title either in the Hebrew or Chaldee; but it is attributed to David by the Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Syriac." (Adam Clarke)

"The Psalm gives an interpretation to the many voices of nature, and sings sweetly both of creation and providence. The poem contains a complete cosmos: sea and land, cloud and sunlight, plant and animal, light and darkness, life and death, are all proved to be expressive of the presence of the Lord." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. The glory of God's creation in light, angels, earth, and waters.

1. (1-2) Praising the God of honor, majesty, and might.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD my God, You are very great:

You are clothed with honor and majesty,

Who cover Yourself with light as *with* a garment,

Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.

- a. **Bless the LORD, O my soul:** Repeated three times in the previous psalm, this phrase is a call to worship God

in spirit and in truth, and to do so from one's inmost being.

b. **You are very great:** The psalmist worshipped Yahweh as his **God**, and as the **great** One who is **clothed with honor and majesty**. The idol gods of the nations were often described as crude and shameful in their conduct, but Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, is known for His **honor and majesty**.

i. "The verse sums up the whole of the creative act in one grand thought. In that act the invisible God has arrayed Himself in splendour and glory, making visible these inherent attributes. That is the deepest meaning of Creation. The Universe is the garment of God." (Maclaren)

c. **Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment:** God's **honor and majesty** are as apparent as a person's clothing, and so is the **light**-like purity of His being. Just as the creation in Genesis begins with describing the creation of light, so the psalmist first mentions light.

i. "The patterns are close enough to show that the psalmist had Genesis in mind as he worked on his composition. We will not be far wrong if we think of Psalms 104 as a poetic reflection on the more factual account in Genesis." (Boice)

ii. "The structure of the psalm is modelled fairly closely on that of Genesis 1, taking the stages of creation as starting-points for praise." (Kidner)

iii. In a small way, we can understand this idea of **light as a garment** by consider the appearance of Jesus at His transfiguration: *His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light* (Mat 17:2).

iv. 1Ti 6:16 says God dwells *in unapproachable light*. Perhaps this is another description or allusion to **light as a garment**. "If light itself is but his garment and veil, what must be the blazing splendour of his own essential being! We are lost in astonishment, and dare not pry into the mystery lest we be blinded by its insufferable glory." (Spurgeon)

d. **Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain**: God's power is also apparent as the One who created the vast heavens. Since the Creator is greater than His creation, the God who created the **heavens** is impressive, indeed.

2. (3-4) *The supreme might of God seen in creation.*

He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,

Who makes the clouds His chariot,

Who walks on the wings of the wind,

Who makes His angels spirits,

His ministers a flame of fire.

a. **He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters**: The God of all creation can build and do what no one else can. He does not share the limitations of the creation; He makes **the clouds His chariot** and He **walks on the wings of the wind**.

i. The picture described is full of activity and excitement. "The metaphor of his taking up its parts and powers as his robe, tent, palace and chariot invites us to see the world as something he delights in, which is charged with his energy and alive with his presence." (Kidner)

ii. "The Lord is surrounded by his servants, whether they be created like the angels or be powers inherent in his created order (winds, lightning). The Creator-

King is, as it were, driving his chariot, symbolic of his governance of his creation.” (VanGemeren)

iii. **Upper chambers:** “The ‘chambers,’ built above the first story of a house for the purpose of privacy and seclusion (cf. 1Ki 17:19; 2Ki 4:10), represent God’s involvement with and separation from his world (Amo 9:6).” (VanGemeren)

b. **Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire:** God also rules over the angels, equipping and commissioning them as it pleases Him.

i. Later, the writer of Hebrews quoted Psalm verse 4 and revealed that the **His** in that verse refers to the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Heb 1:7). This confirms the deity of Jesus the Messiah, because the angels belong to *Him* – they are **His angels** and **His ministers**.

3. (5-9) *The power of God evident at the flood and its aftermath.*

**You who laid the foundations of the earth,
So that it should not be moved forever,
You covered it with the deep as *with* a garment;
The waters stood above the mountains.
At Your rebuke they fled;
At the voice of Your thunder they hastened away.
They went up over the mountains;
They went down into the valleys,
To the place which You founded for them.
You have set a boundary that they may not pass over,
That they may not return to cover the earth.**

a. **You who laid the foundations of the earth:** The psalmist understood that *God* was the Creator of all things, and that it was He who **laid the foundations of the earth**. It did not happen by chance or random events. There is a Creator behind all things.

i. In some ways, the modern age is significantly defined by man's rejection of God as Creator. Having abandoned this fundamental truth, humanity drifts without a proper sense of responsibility or accountability toward its Creator.

b. **So that it should not be moved forever:** What God built, He built well. The earth's **foundations** are solid and will **not be moved** until God Himself moves them.

i. **The foundations of the earth:** "Upon itself, or its own weight, whereby it stands as fast and unmovable, as if it were built upon the strongest foundations imaginable; which is a stupendous work of Divine power and wisdom." (Poole)

c. **You covered it with the deep:** The psalmist had in mind two events. The separation of the waters at creation (Gen 1:9-10) and the global flood described in Genesis 7. From reading Gen 7:19-20, the psalmist understood that **the waters stood above the mountains** (*And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered*).

i. "Indeed, the process at the creation was so exactly similar to that at the deluge, with regards to the circumstances here mentioned, that it matters not to which we apply the beautiful and truly poetical passage before us." (Horne)

d. **At Your rebuke they fled:** When the waters had covered the earth long enough, God made them recede (Gen 8:3), and the psalmist poetically described it as God's **rebuke** of the waters. God's **voice** is poetically described as **thunder**.

i. Centuries later, God the Son would rebuke waters and calm them (Mat 8:26).

e. **To the place which You founded for them:** The waters receded to the place God had appointed for them, and He **set a boundary** for the waters so they could never again **cover the earth**, as He promised (Gen 8:11-17).

i. "The waters of the sea are not only prevented from destroying the earth, but, by a wonderful machinery, are rendered the means of preserving every living thing which moveth thereon." (Horne)

4. (10-13) *What God did with the waters of the earth.*

He sends the springs into the valleys;

They flow among the hills.

They give drink to every beast of the field;

The wild donkeys quench their thirst.

By them the birds of the heavens have their home;

They sing among the branches.

He waters the hills from His upper chambers;

The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.

a. **He sends the springs into the valleys:** In the previous section, the psalmist referred to what God did with the waters of the earth after the flood in Noah's day. Now he considers how God distributed waters across the land, sending **springs into the valleys** to **give drink to every beast of the field**.

b. **The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works:** The psalmist considered how the water, plants, and animals of the earth each find their place in God's plan and order. The **wild donkeys** drink their water, the **birds** have a home so they may **sing among the branches**. He saw a good, harmonious world in nature and knew Yahweh was responsible for it.

i. **Wild donkeys:** “Which he mentions, partly because they are dry and thirsty creatures; and partly because they live in dry and desolate wildernesses, and are neither ruled nor regarded by men, and are most stupid creatures, and yet are plentifully provided for by the care and bounty of Divine Providence.” (Poole)

ii. **They sing among the branches:** “If these little choristers of the air, when refreshed by the streams near which they dwell, express their gratitude by chanting, in their way, the praises of their Maker and Preserver, how ought Christians to blush, who, besides the comforts and conveniences of this world, are so indulged with copious draughts of the water of eternal life, if, for so great blessings, they pay not their tribute of thanksgiving, and sing not unto the Lord the songs of Sion!” (Horne)

B. The glory of God’s creation in living things, plants and animals.

1. (14-18) God’s wonderful world of nature.

**He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
And vegetation for the service of man,
That he may bring forth food from the earth,
And wine *that* makes glad the heart of man,
Oil to make *his* face shine,
And bread *which* strengthens man’s heart.
The trees of the LORD are full *of sap*,
The cedars of Lebanon which He planted,
Where the birds make their nests;
The stork has her home in the fir trees.
The high hills *are* for the wild goats;
The cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers.**

a. **He causes grass to grow for the cattle:** The psalmist continued his thoughts on nature, seeing how

God provides

grass for animals and **vegetation for the service of man**.

i. "Divine power is as truly and as worthily put forth in the feeding of beasts as in the nurturing of man; watch but a blade of grass with a devout eye and you may see God at work within it." (Spurgeon)

b. **That he may bring forth food from the earth:** God designed the ecology of the world so that with work, man may **bring forth food**. Under God's blessing and man's work, the food brought forth is wonderful. God's earth gives us **wine, oil, and bread** – each with their own blessing and goodness.

i. **Wine that makes glad the heart of man:** "*Wine, in moderate quantity, has a wondrous tendency to revive and invigorate the human being. Ardent spirits exhilarate, but they exhaust the strength; and every dose leaves man the worse. Unadulterated wine, on the contrary, exhilarates and invigorates: it makes him cheerful, and provides for the continuance of that cheerfulness by strengthening the muscles, and bracing the nerves. This is its use. Those who continue drinking till wine inflames them, abuse this mercy of God.*" (Clarke)

c. **The trees of the LORD are full of sap:** The psalmist had a vision of how *healthy* and vigorous nature is. He thought of the mighty **cedars of Lebanon** and how, in their **sap**-filled health, they give a place **where the birds make their nests**.

i. They are **the trees of the LORD** in the sense that no human hand planted them; **He planted** these mighty trees. "Who ever planted the seeds of the cedars of Lebanon, or of the thousands of woods and

forests on the globe? God himself sowed those seeds, and they have sprung up and flourished without the care of man." (Clarke)

ii. "What would our Psalmist have said to some of the trees in the Yosemite Valley? Truly these are worthy to be called the trees of the Lord, for towering stature and enormous girth. Thus is the care of God seen to be effectual and all-sufficient. If trees uncared for by man are yet so full of sap, we may rest assured that the people of God who by faith live upon the Lord alone shall be equally well sustained." (Spurgeon)

iii. "You will observe that the word '*sap*,' is inserted in italics; it is not there in the Hebrew. 'The trees of the Lord are full,' or rather, which gives the meaning clearly, 'The trees of the Lord are satiated – are satisfied – the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted.'" (Spurgeon)

iv. "A traveler tells us that in the wood bark, and even the cones of the cedar there is an abundance of resin. They are saturated with it so that he says he can scarcely touch one of the cedars of Lebanon without having the turpentine or resin of them upon his hands. That is always the way with a truly healthy Christian, his grace is externally manifested." (Spurgeon)

d. **The stork has her home:** The birds have their nests, but the other animals have their homes also, including the **stork**, the **wild goats**, and the **rock badgers**. A wise and loving God provides for them all.

i. "The *badger* is a misnomer for the hyrax, a small and shy rock-dweller (cf. Pro 30:26)." (Kidner)

2. (19-23) *The sun and moon bless the world God created.*

**He appointed the moon for seasons;
The sun knows its going down.
You make darkness, and it is night,
In which all the beasts of the forest creep about.
The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their food from God.
When the sun rises, they gather together
And lie down in their dens.
Man goes out to his work
And to his labor until the evening.**

a. **He appointed the moon for seasons:** The psalmist turned his attention to the **moon** and the **sun**. They operate according to God's plan, providing **darkness** so that **all the beasts of the forest creep about**.

i. "The moon is named first, because the Hebrew day began with the evening." (Maclaren)

ii. "Canaanites attributed rain, sunlight, and the lunar cycle to specific deities. For Israel the Lord sovereignly rules over all creation and establishes order by his wise administration." (VanGemeren)

b. **When the sun rises:** Just as God provided for the night, He also provided for the day, when **lions** and other nocturnal animals **lie down in their dens**. When the lions sleep, **man goes out to his work** until **the evening**. All operate according to God's wise plan for creation.

i. "God feeds not only sheep and lambs, but wolves and lions. It is a strange expression that young lions when they roar after their prey, should be said to *seek their meat of God*; implying that neither their own strength nor craft could feed them without help from God. The strongest creatures left to themselves cannot help themselves." (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "And as it would not be convenient for man and the wild beasts of the forest to collect their food *at the same time*, he has given the *night* to them as the proper time to procure their prey, and the *day* to rest in. When *MAN labours*, *THEY rest*; when *MAN rests*, *THEY labour*." (Clarke)

3. (24-26) *The wonder of the sea God created.*

O LORD, how manifold are Your works!
In wisdom You have made them all.
The earth is full of Your possessions—
This great and wide sea,
In which *are* innumerable teeming things,
Living things both small and great.
There the ships sail about;
***There is* that Leviathan**
Which You have made to play there.

a. **O LORD, how manifold are Your works:** The psalmist continues in amazement as he looks at nature and creation. He sees it all not as the result of random and purposeless events, but as the wise **works** of a great God who has right of ownership over all of it (**Your possessions**).

i. **Your works.... Your possessions:** "They are all God's *property*, and should be used only in reference to the end for which they were created. All *abuse* and *waste* of God's creatures are spoil and robbery on the property of the Creator." (Clarke)

b. **This great and wide sea:** The psalmist thought of the greatness of the oceans (in his case, the Mediterranean Sea). The vast waters contain **innumerable teeming things**, including great and mysterious things such as **Leviathan** which is also described in Job 41.

i. "There is not in all nature a more august and striking object than the ocean." (Horne)

ii. **Leviathan**: "This may mean the *whale*, or any of the large marine animals. The *Septuagint* and *Vulgate* call it *dragon*. Sometimes the *crocodile* is intended by the original word." (Clarke)

iii. "As for *Leviathan*, a name which can have a sinister ring (see on 74:13-15), he makes his appearance simply as some large and sportive creature, whose very existence glorifies and delights its Maker." (Kidner)

C. God and the world He created.

1. (27-30) *Creation's dependence upon God.*

These all wait for You,

That You may give *them* their food in due season.

***What* You give them they gather in;**

You open Your hand, they are filled with good.

You hide Your face, they are troubled;

You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;

And You renew the face of the earth.

a. **These all wait for You, that You may give them their food**: The psalmist considered all kinds of created things from the land, sea, and air. He recognized that they **all** depended upon God, who provided for them **in due season**.

i. **In due season**: "God has a timing for all things, and does not feed his creatures by fits and starts; he gives them daily bread, and a quantity proportioned to their needs. This is all that any of us should expect; if even the brute creatures are content with a

sufficiency we ought not to be more greedy than they." (Spurgeon)

b. **What You give them they gather in:** God feeds the animals, but does not from heaven pour food into their mouths. He provides, but they must **gather in**.

i. "When we see the chickens picking up the corn which the housewife scatters from her lap we have an apt illustration of the manner in which the Lord supplies the needs of all living things – he gives and they gather." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The verb rendered '*gather*' means to pick up or collect from the ground. It is used in the history of the manna (Exo 16:1; Exo 16:5; Exo 16:16), to which there is obvious allusion. The act of gathering from the ground seems to presuppose a previous throwing down from heaven." (Alexander, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. This is a wonderful way for God's people to think of His provision. God provides, but we must gather in. His provision is all around us, and we simply need the wisdom and effort to gather it in.

iv. This principle also has application to evangelism: "God will give us souls if we pray for them, but we must seek after them. When the Lord calls a man to speak in his name, he intends to give him some success, but he must be on the watch to gather it." (Spurgeon)

c. **You hide Your face, they are troubled:** Creation is so dependent upon God that if He were to **hide** His presence or **take away their breath**, they would soon perish. There is a real sense in which creation is much more responsive and surrendered to God than humanity.

d. **You send forth Your Spirit, they are created:** The withdrawal of God's presence or favor means ruin for all creation, but the outpouring of His **Spirit** means life and renewal.

i. **You send forth Your Spirit, they are created:** "The Spirit of God creates every day: what is it that continueth things in their created being, but providence? That is a true axiom in divinity, *Providence is creation continued.*" (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (31-32) *Blessing the God of all creation.*

**May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
May the LORD rejoice in His works.
He looks on the earth, and it trembles;
He touches the hills, and they smoke.**

a. **May the glory of the LORD endure forever:** As the psalmist considered the power and wisdom of God in all creation, it made him long for His **glory** to **endure forever**.

i. "His works may pass away, but not his glory. Were it only for what he has already done, the Lord deserves to be praised without ceasing." (Spurgeon)

b. **May the LORD rejoice in His works:** The psalmist also wanted God to find pleasure in what He had created. This implies that His creatures that are gifted with rational choice (such as humanity) should deliberately choose to give God reasons to

rejoice in His works.

i. "This is perhaps the highest and most daring note in all this wonderful song of praise. So impressed with the glory and wonder and beauty of creation was the singer, that he positively called upon God to rejoice in what He had wrought." (Morgan)

ii. "As he did at the creation, when he saw all to be good, and very good; so still, it doth God good, as it were, to see the poor creatures feed, and men to give him the honour of all." (Trapp)

iii. "There is nothing irreverent in this. It is rather an expression of the soul's profound understanding of what God actually feels in view of His own mighty and marvelous works." (Morgan)

c. **He looks on the earth, and it trembles:** The shaking earth and smoking hills may be a reference to God's manifested presence at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19). These are reminders of the overwhelming power and might of God.

3. (33-35) *A determination to praise God in song and in meditation.*

**I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
May my meditation be sweet to Him;
I will be glad in the LORD.
May sinners be consumed from the earth,
And the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!
Praise the LORD!**

a. **I will sing to the LORD as long as I live:** This remarkable psalm has little or no focus on God as redeemer and savior. Its focus is on the greatness and goodness of God as displayed in creation. Yet that was enough to make the psalmist determined to say **I will sing to the LORD as long as I live**. The God of all creation is worthy of our life-long praise.

i. "As far as he was concerned, an entire lifetime of praise would be insufficient to honor God properly." (Boice)

ii. This again shows the importance of *knowing God as Creator*. The rejection of God as Creator has had deep and terrible effects upon the hearts and minds of the modern world.

b. **May my meditation be sweet to Him:** The psalmist understood that God is also worshipped by our *thoughts*. What we choose to set our mind on is a measure of what we truly value. Knowing the greatness and goodness of God as revealed in creation, the psalmist wanted his thoughts to be pleasing to God.

i. Creation is a wonderful subject for sweet meditation, but we have even greater subjects. "Redemption is a choicer theme for meditation than creation is, for its wonders are far greater." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The last words ever written by Henry Martyn, dying among Mohammedans in Persia, was: I sat in the orchard and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God, in solitude my company, my Friend and Comforter." (Spurgeon)

c. **I will be glad in the LORD:** We again sense a note of determination. He *chose* to be **glad in the LORD**, making a rational choice in light of God's revelation of Himself through creation.

d. **May sinners be consumed from the earth:** This seems a strange and solemn declaration in this psalm. Yet it is the logical consequence for those who *reject* God as Creator. Paul later developed this thought in Romans 1, speaking of the guilt and consequences due to those who reject God as Creator and worship the creature rather than the Creator.

i. "The psalmist is not vindictive in his prayer against the wicked but longs for a world fully established and

maintained by the Lord, without outside interference.”
(VanGemeren)

e. **Bless the LORD, O my soul:** The psalmist was compelled to consider the dark consequences due to those who rejected the Creator God, but he could not end this remarkable psalm on a dark note. He ends with another rousing call to His own soul to **bless the LORD**, and to **praise the LORD**. This is the fitting response of the creature to the Creator.

i. **Praise the LORD:** “This is the first psalm which closes with Hallelujah (Praise Jehovah).” (Maclaren)

ii. “This is the first occurrence of *hallelujah* in the Psalter, and it is significant that it is joined to a prayer for the destruction of the wicked, just as it is in Revelation 19.” (Boice)

Tell of All His Wonderful Works

Psa 105:1 Give thanks to the LORD, proclaim his greatness; tell the nations what he has done.

Psa 105:2 Sing praise to the LORD; tell the wonderful things he has done.

Psa 105:3 Be glad that we belong to him; let all who worship him rejoice.

Psa 105:4 Go to the LORD for help; and worship him continually.

Psa 105:5 (5-6) You descendants of Abraham, his servant; you descendants of Jacob, the man he chose: remember the miracles that God performed and the judgments that he gave.

Psa 105:7 The LORD is our God; his commands are for all the world.

Psa 105:8 He will keep his covenant forever, his promises for a thousand generations.

Psa 105:9 He will keep the agreement he made with Abraham and his promise to Isaac.

Psa 105:10 The LORD made a covenant with Jacob, one that will last forever.

Psa 105:11 "I will give you the land of Canaan," he said. "It will be your own possession."

Psa 105:12 God's people were few in number, strangers in the land of Canaan.

Psa 105:13 They wandered from country to country, from one kingdom to another.

Psa 105:14 But God let no one oppress them; to protect them, he warned the kings:

Psa 105:15 "Don't harm my chosen servants; do not touch my prophets."

Psa 105:16 The LORD sent famine to their country and took away all their food.

Psa 105:17 But he sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who had been sold as a slave.

Psa 105:18 His feet were kept in chains, and an iron collar was around his neck,

Psa 105:19 until what he had predicted came true. The word of the LORD proved him right.

Psa 105:20 Then the king of Egypt had him released; the ruler of nations set him free.

Psa 105:21 He put him in charge of his government and made him ruler over all the land,

Psa 105:22 with power over the king's officials and authority to instruct his advisers.

Psa 105:23 Then Jacob went to Egypt and settled in that country.

Psa 105:24 The LORD gave many children to his people and made them stronger than their enemies.

Psa 105:25 He made the Egyptians hate his people and treat his servants with deceit.

Psa 105:26 Then he sent his servant Moses, and Aaron, whom he had chosen.

Psa 105:27 They did God's mighty acts and performed miracles in Egypt.

Psa 105:28 God sent darkness on the country, but the Egyptians did not obey his command.

Psa 105:29 He turned their rivers into blood and killed all their fish.

Psa 105:30 Their country was overrun with frogs; even the palace was filled with them.

Psa 105:31 God commanded, and flies and gnats swarmed throughout the whole country.

Psa 105:32 He sent hail and lightning on their land instead of rain;

Psa 105:33 he destroyed their grapevines and fig trees and broke down all the trees.

Psa 105:34 He commanded, and the locusts came, countless millions of them;

Psa 105:35 they ate all the plants in the land; they ate all the crops.

Psa 105:36 He killed the first-born sons of all the families of Egypt.

Psa 105:37 Then he led the Israelites out; they carried silver and gold, and all of them were healthy and strong.

Psa 105:38 The Egyptians were afraid of them and were glad when they left.

Psa 105:39 God put a cloud over his people and a fire at night to give them light.

Psa 105:40 They asked, and he sent quails; he gave them food from heaven to satisfy them.

Psa 105:41 He opened a rock, and water gushed out, flowing through the desert like a river.

Psa 105:42 He remembered his sacred promise to Abraham his servant.

Psa 105:43 So he led his chosen people out, and they sang and shouted for joy.

Psa 105:44 He gave them the lands of other peoples and let them take over their fields,

Psa 105:45 so that his people would obey his laws and keep all his commands. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 105:1-45

Psalms 105 – The LORD’s Blessings on His Covenant People

Whoever arranged and ordered the psalms placed Psalms 105 and Psalms 106 together purposefully. "This and the following psalm are companions. They reveal the two sides of the relation between God and His people during a long period. This one sings the song of His faithfulness and power; while the next tells the sad story of repeated failure and rebellion on the part of His people." (G. Campbell Morgan)

The first 15 verses of Psalms 105 are also found in 1Ch 16:8-22 and presented there as a composition of David, written and sung for the bringing of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. We can therefore conclude that though this psalm is not here specifically attributed to King David, he is the author of it.

A. A call to the people of God.

1. (1-3) A call to worship the LORD.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD!

Call upon His name;

Make known His deeds among the peoples!

**Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
Talk of all His wondrous works!
Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!**

a. **Oh, give thanks to the LORD:** Previous psalms focused on stirring one's soul to bless the LORD. Now David encouraged himself and others to **give thanks to the LORD**, and Psalms 105 will give many reasons for this thanksgiving. This is the first of several quickly stated encouragements to honor and worship God.

i. These first six verses of Psalms 105 "...are full of exultation, and, in their reiterated short clauses, are like the joyful cries of a herald bringing good tidings to Zion." (Maclaren)

b. **Call upon His name:** This probably has the idea of calling upon Yahweh and *not* upon the idols of the nations. He alone deserves to be called upon to praise and to rely on.

c. **Make known His deeds among the peoples:** David will recount the amazing **deeds** God has done in the sight of all **peoples**, and he encouraged all who heard him to do the same. God's people should **talk of all His wondrous works!**

d. **Sing to Him:** As in many other places in the psalms, God's people are told the importance of praising Him in song. The songs should be sung **to Him**, and not to an audience or merely for one's own pleasure.

e. **Glory in His holy name:** We can glory in many things. Some glory in wealth or status, while others glory in pleasure or entertainment. God's people rightly find their greatest **glory in His holy name.**

i. VanGemeren suggested three goals accomplished with praise in the context of this psalm.

- Praise magnifies the LORD, attributing power, holiness, and glory to Him.
- Praise intensifies an appreciation of the history of redemption.
- Praise witnesses to those outside the covenant community.

2. (4-6) *A call to seek the LORD and remember His great works.*

Seek the LORD and His strength;

Seek His face evermore!

Remember His marvelous works which He has done,

His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,

O seed of Abraham His servant,

You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!

a. **Seek the LORD and His strength:** God's people are invited to not only **seek** God Himself, but also His **strength**. This strength is given to God's people as they seek Him, as Paul would later write: *Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* (Eph 6:10).

i. "Seek, seek, seek, we have the word three times, and though the words differ in the Hebrew, the sense is the same. It must be a blessed thing to *seek*, or we should not be thus stirred up to do so." (Spurgeon)

b. **Remember His marvelous works which He has done:** There is the constant danger that God's people would *forget* **His marvelous works**. It dishonors God when we forget His great works, and we will always drift to forgetfulness if we do not actively **remember**.

i. "Alas, we are far more ready to recollect foolish and evil things than to retain in our minds the glorious deeds of Jehovah. If we would keep these in remembrance our faith would be stronger, our

gratitude warmer, our devotion more fervent, and our love more intense." (Spurgeon)

c. **O seed of Abraham His servant:** This psalm is especially directed toward God's covenant people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and **Jacob**. These were **His chosen ones** in His covenant plan.

i. "Abraham is here called 'his servant' (v. 6; cf. v. 42), a term of closeness and of special appointment." (VanGemeren)

B. God's care for Israel under the patriarchs.

1. (7-12) *God's marvelous covenant with the patriarchs.*

**He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
He remembers His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,
The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,"
When they were few in number,
Indeed very few, and strangers in it.**

a. **His judgments are in all the earth:** Before focusing on the works and promises God made unto the people of Israel, David reminds us that God is over **all the earth**. His covenant focus on Israel does not take away from His interest and lordship over the whole earth.

i. **He is the LORD our God:** "He is *Jehovah*, the self-existent and eternal God. He is *our God*, he is our portion; has taken us for his people, and makes us happy in his love." (Clarke)

b. **He remembers His covenant forever:** God made a significant covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that was passed to the nation of Israel. It is an **everlasting covenant**, and Israel's role as God's covenant people remains until the end of the age.

i. **The word which He commanded:** "Notice the expression, *the word that he commanded*, as a parallel term to *his covenant*. It puts the stress on God's initiative and authority in the covenant-making, which means that this bond with men is by grace, not mutual bargaining, and serves the interests of God's kingdom, not the selfish ends of men." (Kidner)

ii. Already in Psalms 105 we have repetition of the word **He**. "The master word in the psalm is the pronoun 'He.' In constant repetition it shows the one thought uppermost in the mind of the singer. It is that of perpetual activity of God in all those experiences through which His people have passed." (Morgan)

iii. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, seems to have paraphrased verses 8-11 as recorded in Luk 1:72-75. "Zacharias, under the immediate influence and direction of the Holy Spirit, transfers the language of the old dispensation to the affairs of the new one; he celebrates the redemption of the world, by Christ, from sin and death, in words which literally describe the redemption of Israel from Egypt by Moses." (Horne)

c. **I will give the land of Canaan:** One aspect of this **everlasting covenant** is the land God appointed for Israel. It is **the allotment of their inheritance**, given to them when they were **few in number**. God promised the land to Abraham when he and his family were only a small group of people in the land of Canaan.

2. (13-15) *God's protection of the patriarchs.*

**When they went from one nation to another,
From *one* kingdom to another people,
He permitted no one to do them wrong;
Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes,
Saying, "Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm."**

a. **When they went from one nation to another:** The patriarchs had their seasons of wandering. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:31 to Gen 12:4) and journeyed to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20). Jacob also lived for many years with Laban in *the land of the people of the East* (Gen 29:1).

b. **He permitted no one to do them wrong:** In all their wanderings among the nations, God protected them. He even **rebuked kings for their sakes** (for example, Gen 12:17-20 and Genesis 26).

i. "Destitute as they were of earthly help, the mightiest kings could not hurt them." (Horne)

c. **Do not touch My anointed ones:** God protected Abraham and Sarah before the king Abimelech, and did not let Abimelech **touch** her (Gen 20:6). God protected Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as His **prophets**.

i. **Do not touch My anointed ones:** "The words here mentioned may not have been actually spoken, but the impression of awe which fell upon the nations is thus poetically described." (Spurgeon)

ii. "This God speaketh not of kings, but to kings, concerning his people who have an unction from the Father, being sanctified and set apart for his peculiar purposes. To touch these is to touch the apple of God's eye, Zec 2:8; they are sacred persons." (Trapp)

iii. "It is supposed that the *patriarchs* are here intended; but the whole people of Israel may be meant. They were a kingdom of *priests* and *kings* unto God; and *prophets*, *priests*, and *kings* were always *anointed*." (Clarke)

iv. **Do My prophets no harm:** "The patriarch had deceived Abimelech by saying that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife, and Abimelech had almost taken her before God intervened to warn him that she was married to Abraham. It was then that God referred to Abraham as 'a prophet' (Gen 20:7). Yet a 'lying' prophet! Obviously the emphasis here is upon God's faithfulness, not man's." (Boice)

3. (16-22) *God's care for the patriarchs in the days of Joseph.*

**Moreover He called for a famine in the land;
He destroyed all the provision of bread.
He sent a man before them—
Joseph—who was sold as a slave.
They hurt his feet with fetters,
He was laid in irons.
Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the LORD tested him.
The king sent and released him,
The ruler of the people let him go free.
He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his possessions,
To bind his princes at his pleasure,
And teach his elders wisdom.**

a. **He called for a famine in the land:** The great famine that came upon the greater region in the days of Joseph (Gen 41:53-57) was no accident. God **called** the famine, and **destroyed all the provision of bread.**

b. **He sent a man before them:** David understood that the injustice and misfortune which came upon Joseph was ordained by God, so that in His plan he could be **sent** ahead to Egypt to save the patriarchs (and the whole region) from famine.

c. **They hurt his feet with fetters:** Joseph's pain in his slavery was real, yet it did not cancel the plan of God. His season of affliction was a time when **the word of the LORD tested him**.

i. **He was laid in irons:** "Heb. His soul came into iron; or, the iron entered into his soul; but sin entered not into his conscience. See a like phrase Luk 2:35." (Trapp)

ii. "May we not yet again turn the sentence round, and say that the iron entered into his soul? When we first meet him, Joseph is a tender, yielding lad, with dreams of rule, but no conspicuous power. Yet he emerges from his captivity well qualified to take the helm of Egypt." (Meyer)

iii. "The iron fetters were preparing him to wear chains of gold, and making his feet ready to stand on high places. It is even so with all the Lord's afflicted ones, they too shall one day step from their prisons to their thrones." (Spurgeon)

d. **He made him lord of his house:** Joseph was brought low, but in God's timing he was lifted up. He was given authority over all the **possessions** of the house, and authority over **princes** and **elders**.

4. (23-25) *God's preservation of Israel in Egypt.*

**Israel also came into Egypt,
And Jacob dwelt in the land of Ham.
He increased His people greatly,
And made them stronger than their enemies.**

**He turned their heart to hate His people,
To deal craftily with His servants.**

a. **Israel also came into Egypt:** After God sent Joseph ahead, He took the people of Israel into the land of Egypt for their own provision and protection as a people.

i. **Into Egypt:** "Whither he feared to go, till God promised him his presence and protection, Gen 46:3-4. God saith the same in effect to us, when to descend into the grave, Fear not to go down, I will go down with thee, and be better to thee than thy fears." (Trapp)

b. **He increased His people greatly:** In Egypt, God's covenant people multiplied with very little intermarriage with the Egyptians. They were able to grow **greatly** (Exo 1:7), and eventually they became **stronger than their enemies**.

c. **He turned their heart to hate His people:** The people of Israel were welcomed into the land of Egypt in the days of Joseph, but in later generations they were hated and made into slaves for the Egyptians (Exo 1:8-12).

i. "God cannot in any sense be the author of sin so far as to be morally responsible for its existence, but it often happens through the evil which is inherent in human nature that the acts of the Lord arouse the ill-feelings of ungodly men." (Spurgeon)

C. God's care for the Israelites as they came into the Promised Land.

1. (26-36) The deliverance from Egypt.

**He sent Moses His servant,
And Aaron whom He had chosen.
They performed His signs among them,
And wonders in the land of Ham.**

**He sent darkness, and made *it* dark;
And they did not rebel against His word.
He turned their waters into blood,
And killed their fish.
Their land abounded with frogs,
Even in the chambers of their kings.
He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
And lice in all their territory.
He gave them hail for rain,
And flaming fire in their land.
He struck their vines also, and their fig trees,
And splintered the trees of their territory.
He spoke, and locusts came,
Young locusts without number,
And ate up all the vegetation in their land,
And devoured the fruit of their ground.
He also destroyed all the firstborn in their land,
The first of all their strength.**

a. **He sent Moses His servant:** With Israel under slavery and bondage in Egypt, God raised up deliverers for His people at the appointed time: **Moses** (given the wonderful title **His servant**) and his brother **Aaron**. God gave these men the ability to perform **His signs** to authenticate their work.

b. **He sent darkness, and made it dark:** David clearly regarded the record in Exodus as historically true. He recounted the plagues God sent upon Egypt, all according to the **word** God gave to Moses and Aaron (**they did not rebel against His word**).

i. "In order to understand these plagues we need to understand that they were directed against the gods and goddesses of Egypt and were intended to show the superiority of the God of Israel to the Egyptian gods." (Boice)

- When God **sent darkness**, He showed Himself greater than *Ra* (the sun God) and *Nut* (the sky goddess).
- When God **turned their waters into blood**, He showed Himself greater than *Osiris* (god of the Nile) and *Khnum* (the guardian of the Nile).
- When God made their **land** abound **with frogs**, He showed Himself greater than the goddess *Hekt* (the frog-goddess of fertility).
- When God sent **swarms of flies** and **lice**, He showed Himself greater than the fly-god *Uatchit*.
- When God sent **hail for rain**, He showed Himself greater than *Geb*, the god of the earth; *Nepri*, the goddess of grain; and *Anuibis*, the guardian of the fields.
- When God sent **locusts without number**, He showed Himself greater than *Shu*, the god of the atmosphere, and *Min*, the deity of the harvest.

ii. David listed eight of the ten plagues described in Exodus 7-12, but not in the same order as in the Exodus account. Psalms 78 also has a partial listing of the plagues.

iii. "The plagues are presented here not to trace the progress of Pharaoh's hardening – he is not mentioned – but to praise the decisive and versatile power of God." (Kidner)

iv. **He struck their vines also, and their fig trees:** "This is not mentioned in Exodus; but we have had it before, Psa 78:47." (Clarke)

c. **He also destroyed all the firstborn in their land:** The final and greatest plague against the Egyptians was the terrible death of the firstborn in every household

which was not protected by the blood of the Passover lamb.

2. (37-41) *The deliverance from Egypt into the wilderness.*

**He also brought them out with silver and gold,
And *there was* none feeble among His tribes.
Egypt was glad when they departed,
For the fear of them had fallen upon them.
He spread a cloud for a covering,
And fire to give light in the night.
The people asked, and He brought quail,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
It ran in the dry places *like* a river.**

a. **He also brought them out with silver and gold:** When Israel came out of Egypt, the Egyptians gave them great riches (Exo 12:35-36). The Egyptians were so crushed by the many plagues that **Egypt was glad when they departed.**

i. **There was none feeble among His tribes:** "Diseased or unable for his journey; which in so vast a body, and in a time of such mortality as it had been in Egypt, and in a people which had been so long and so dreadfully oppressed as the Israelites were, was wonderful; but they all journeyed on foot, Exo 12:37." (Poole)

ii. "See the contrast between Egypt and Israel – in Egypt one dead in every house, and among the Israelites not one so much as limping." (Spurgeon)

b. **He spread a cloud for a covering:** As they journeyed through the wilderness, God gave Israel the protection of a **cloud** by day. He also provided **fire to give them light in the night.** These remarkable

emblems of God's presence and care led Israel through the wilderness.

c. **The people asked, and He brought quail:** God miraculously supplied nourishment for Israel in the wilderness, providing **quail** and manna (**the bread of heaven**), and **water** that gushed forth from rocks.

i. David gave a distinctly *positive* remembrance of Israel in the wilderness, not mentioning their many sins, rebellions, and examples of unbelief. His purpose here is to remember the great works of God, and not to focus on the failings of man.

ii. This is stated "...without one disturbing reference to the sins and failures which darkened the forty years. These are spread out at length, without flattery or minimising, in the next psalm; but here the theme is God's wonders." (Maclaren)

iii. Adam Clarke had a curious comment on verse 41, **He opened the rock:** "I can now add, that a piece of this rock, broken off by the hand of my nephew, E. S. A. Clarke, in the course of the present year [1822,] now lies before me. It is fine *granite*; and so well distinguished as a granite, that the *feldt-spar*, the *mica*, and the *quartz*, of which granite is composed, appear very distinctly."

3. (42-45) *God graciously brought Israel into the land of Canaan.*

**For He remembered His holy promise,
And Abraham His servant.
He brought out His people with joy,
His chosen ones with gladness.
He gave them the lands of the Gentiles,
And they inherited the labor of the nations,
That they might observe His statutes**

**And keep His laws.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **He remembered His holy promise:** God's faithfulness to Israel in taking them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into Canaan was all based on a fulfillment of **His holy promise**. God binds Himself by His promises, and regards them as **holy**.

b. **He brought out His people with joy:** We could say that this joy both belonged to the Israelites and to Yahweh, their covenant God. It pleased both God and His people to rescue the Israelites from their bondage and to bring them into their inheritance (**the lands of the Gentiles**).

i. **They inherited the labor of the nations:** "By right of conquest they freely inherited from the Canaanites cities, vineyards, orchards, cisterns, and all kinds of material benefits." (VanGemeren)

c. **That they might observe His statutes:** At the conclusion of the psalm, David brought home a point of moral obligation. God rescued the Israelites and brought them into the land, setting them free not for the ultimate purpose of personal indulgence, but so they could **observe His statutes** and **keep His laws**.

i. "The emphasis throughout the psalm lies on God's goodness: his promise, protection, providence, and presence. He is true to his word. And as an afterthought, the author reminds God's people of their responsibility. Keeping the precepts of the Lord is, therefore, an expression of joyous gratitude for all the benefits the Lord has provided for his people." (VanGemeren)

ii. "The final verse shows why grace abounded; not that sin might also abound, but (to quote a New

Testament equivalent of verse 45), 'that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (

Rom 8:4).” (Kidner)

d. **Praise the LORD:** Psalms 105 ends just as the previous psalm, with the Hebrew word *Hallelujah*. It is right and worthy for God’s people to remember His marvelous works and to praise Him for all He has done.

Give Thanks to the Lord, for He Is Good

Psa 106:1 Praise the LORD! Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good; his love is eternal.

Psa 106:2 Who can tell all the great things he has done? Who can praise him enough?

Psa 106:3 Happy are those who obey his commands, who always do what is right.

Psa 106:4 Remember me, LORD, when you help your people; include me when you save them.

Psa 106:5 Let me see the prosperity of your people and share in the happiness of your nation, in the glad pride of those who belong to you.

Psa 106:6 We have sinned as our ancestors did; we have been wicked and evil.

Psa 106:7 Our ancestors in Egypt did not understand God's wonderful acts; they forgot the many times he showed them his love, and they rebelled against the Almighty at the Red Sea.

Psa 106:8 But he saved them, as he had promised, in order to show his great power.

Psa 106:9 He gave a command to the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led his people across on dry land.

Psa 106:10 He saved them from those who hated them; he rescued them from their enemies.

Psa 106:11 But the water drowned their enemies; not one of them was left.

Psa 106:12 Then his people believed his promises and sang praises to him.

Psa 106:13 But they quickly forgot what he had done and acted without waiting for his advice.

Psa 106:14 They were filled with craving in the desert and put God to the test;

Psa 106:15 so he gave them what they asked for, but also sent a terrible disease among them.

Psa 106:16 There in the desert they were jealous of Moses and of Aaron, the LORD's holy servant.

Psa 106:17 Then the earth opened up and swallowed Dathan and buried Abiram and his family;

Psa 106:18 fire came down on their followers and burned up those wicked people.

Psa 106:19 They made a gold bull-calf at Sinai and worshiped that idol;

Psa 106:20 they exchanged the glory of God for the image of an animal that eats grass.

Psa 106:21 They forgot the God who had saved them by his mighty acts in Egypt.

Psa 106:22 What wonderful things he did there! What amazing things at the Red Sea!

Psa 106:23 When God said that he would destroy his people, his chosen servant, Moses, stood up against God and kept his anger from destroying them.

Psa 106:24 Then they rejected the pleasant land, because they did not believe God's promise.

Psa 106:25 They stayed in their tents and grumbled and would not listen to the LORD.

Psa 106:26 So he have them a solemn warning that he would make them die in the desert

Psa 106:27 and scatter their descendants among the heathen, letting them die in foreign countries.

Psa 106:28 Then at Peor, God's people joined in the worship of Baal and ate sacrifices offered to dead gods.

Psa 106:29 They stirred up the LORD's anger by their actions, and a terrible disease broke out among them.

Psa 106:30 But Phinehas stood up and punished the guilty, and the plague was stopped.

Psa 106:31 This has been remembered in his favor ever since and will be for all time to come.

Psa 106:32 At the springs of Meribah the people made the LORD angry, and Moses was in trouble on their account.

Psa 106:33 They made him so bitter that he spoke without stopping to think.

Psa 106:34 They did not kill the heathen, as the LORD had commanded them to do,

Psa 106:35 but they intermarried with them and adopted their pagan ways.

Psa 106:36 God's people worshiped idols, and this caused their destruction.

Psa 106:37 They offered their own sons and daughters as sacrifices to the idols of Canaan.

Psa 106:38 They killed those innocent children, and the land was defiled by those murders.

Psa 106:39 They made themselves impure by their actions and were unfaithful to God.

Psa 106:40 So the LORD was angry with his people; he was disgusted with them.

Psa 106:41 He abandoned them to the power of the heathen, and their enemies ruled over them.

Psa 106:42 They were oppressed by their enemies and were in complete subjection to them.

Psa 106:43 Many times the LORD rescued his people, but they chose to rebel against him and sank deeper into sin.

Psa 106:44 Yet the LORD heard them when they cried out, and he took notice of their distress.

Psa 106:45 For their sake he remembered his covenant, and because of his great love he relented.

Psa 106:46 He made all their oppressors feel sorry for them.

Psa 106:47 Save us, O LORD our God, and bring us back from among the nations, so that we may be thankful and praise your holy name.

Psa 106:48 Praise the LORD, the God of Israel; praise him now and forever! Let everyone say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD!

Psalms 106:1-48

Psalms 106 – The LORD's Mercy to His Covenant People

"This psalm is the dark counterpart of its predecessor, a shadow cast by human self-will in its long struggle against the light." (Derek Kidner)

Alexander Maclaren observed, "The keynote of Psalms 105 is, 'Remember His mighty deeds,' that of Psalms 106 is, 'They forgot His mighty deeds.'"

"Israel's history is here written with the view of showing human sin, even as the preceding Psalm was composed to magnify divine goodness. It is, in fact, A NATIONAL CONFESSION." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. Praise and prayer.

1. (1) Praising God for His enduring mercy.

Praise the LORD!

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!*

For His mercy *endures forever*.

a. **Praise the LORD:** This psalm begins the way the previous psalm ended, saying *hallelujah!* Psalms 105 gave praise because of God's many gifts and blessings to Israel. This psalm gives praise because of God's great mercy to an often rebellious and ungrateful Israel.

b. **Oh, give thanks to the LORD:** There is a sense of *pleading* in this phrase, as if the psalmist was desperate to draw greater gratitude from himself and God's people, especially in light of His goodness.

i. **For He is good:** "Surely the thought of God's unspeakable goodness most appropriately precedes the psalmist's confession, for nothing so melts a heart in penitence as the remembrance of God's love, and nothing so heightens the evil of sin as the consideration of the patient goodness which it has long flouted." (Maclaren)

c. **His mercy endures forever:** The rest of this long psalm will describe God's great **mercy** (*hesed*, God's loyal covenant love) to a disobedient Israel.

i. "Since man ceases not to be sinful, it is a great blessing that Jehovah ceases not to be merciful." (Spurgeon)

ii. "For all its exposure of man's ingratitude, this is a psalm of praise, for it is God's extraordinary longsuffering that emerges as the real theme." (Kidner)

2. (2-3) Praising God for His mighty acts.

Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?

Who can declare all His praise?

Blessed *are* those who keep justice,

***And* he who does righteousness at all times!**

a. **Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?** In the midst of his praise, the psalmist recognized that his praise wasn't enough. God's **mighty acts** are so many that they are beyond description. Because of this, we cannot fully **declare all His praise**.

i. "Who is sufficient for a work that demandeth the tongues and harps of angels?" (Horne)

b. **Blessed are those who keep justice:** Those who walk in obedience to God (**keep justice...does righteousness**) do their part in declaring God's **praise**.

i. **Blessed are those** "...that are of right principles and upright practices; this is real and substantial praising of God. Thanks doing is the proof of thanksgiving; and the good life of the thankful is the life of thankfulness." (Trapp)

3. (4-5) *Praying to be visited by God's salvation.*

Remember me, O LORD, with the favor You have toward Your people.

Oh, visit me with Your salvation,

That I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones,

That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation,

That I may glory with Your inheritance.

a. **Remember me, O LORD:** With a preface and foundation of praise, the psalmist felt the door was open to ask God for help. He knew that for God to **remember** was to stir His compassionate action. For God to **visit** meant He would come with His **salvation**, bringing deliverance from the present trouble.

i. Horne called the prayer of verses 4-5 "The most spiritual and heavenly petition that the devoutest Christian can [bring] to the throne of grace."

b. **Oh, visit me with Your salvation:** The plea is made as if the psalmist were too sick to go to the doctor for

necessary care, and must have the doctor **visit** him.

i. "There is no salvation apart from the Lord, and he must visit us with it or we shall never obtain it. We are too sick to visit our Great Physician, and therefore he visits us." (Spurgeon)

c. That I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones:

Three reasons for the request are given, each one concerned with the honor and fame of God.

- **That I may see the benefit:** "LORD, I want to see Your people blessed by Your mighty works toward them."

- **That I may rejoice:** "LORD, I want to share in the joy with your blessed and redeemed people."

- **That I may glory:** "LORD, I want to be part of Your victory and the victory of Your people."

B. Confessing Israel's sin and need for God's mercy.

1. (6-7) Israel's guilt in the past and present.

We have sinned with our fathers,

We have committed iniquity,

We have done wickedly.

Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders;

They did not remember the multitude of Your mercies,

But rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea.

a. **We have sinned with our fathers:** This psalm mainly focuses on the repeated failure of Israel through her history. Yet the singer of this psalm did not see failure as something only of Israel's past. He identified his present generation with Israel of old, connected in their sin, their iniquity, and their wicked deeds.

i. This is a remarkably humble and straightforward confession of sin. "Such a prayer stands in the closest

relation to the theme of the psalm, which draws out the dark record of national sin, in order to lead to that national repentance.... Precisely because the hope of restoration is strong, the delineation of sin is unsparing." (Maclaren)

ii. **We have sinned with our fathers:** "The fathers' sins are often reflected in their children; and each new reflection, instead of being weaker, is stronger than the foregoing." (Horne)

iii. "Men may be said to have sinned with their fathers when they imitate them, when they follow the same objects, and make their own lives to be mere continuations of the follies of their sires." (Spurgeon)

b. **Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders:** Based on the lines from verse 6, we understand this to suggest, "Our **fathers** sinned and **rebelled**, and so have we." He recounted Israel's sin at Marah, shortly after coming from the **Red Sea** (Exo 15:22-27).

i. **They did not remember the multitude of Your mercies:** "The contrast between the loving acts (v. 7, pl. of *hesed*; NIV, 'kindnesses') of the Lord and Israel's lack of responsiveness dramatizes the greatness of God's love and salvation. He delivered a people who did not respond to his love!" (VanGemeren)

2. (8-12) *The mercy of God's salvation to rebellious Israel.*

**Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake,
That He might make His mighty power known.
He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up;
So He led them through the depths,
As through the wilderness.
He saved them from the hand of him who hated *them*,**

**And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
The waters covered their enemies;
There was not one of them left.
Then they believed His words;
They sang His praise.**

a. **Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake:** The Israelites responded to God's great deliverance with ingratitude and rebellion. Despite all that (**nevertheless**), God answered with rescue, but not only for Israel's sake. **He saved them** so that **He might make His mighty power known**.

i. "Thus Israel's history is as much the story of God's mercy, faithfulness, and long-suffering as it is the story of Israel's faithlessness and unbelief. In fact, it is against the background of their sin that God's patience is most fully illuminated." (Boice)

ii. **His name's sake:** "The Lord very jealously guards his own name and honour. It shall never be said of him that he cannot or will not save his people, or that he cannot abate the haughtiness of his defiant foes. This respect unto his own honour ever leads him to deeds of mercy, and hence we may well rejoice that he is a jealous God." (Spurgeon)

b. **He rebuked the Red Sea:** The great works of God are remembered, from the dividing of the Red Sea to the destruction of the Egyptian army (**waters covered their enemies**).

c. **They believed His words; they sang His praise:** Israel's reaction to God's saving works was not *all* rebellion and disobedience. There were times they trusted God's **words** and praised Him in song (for example, Exodus 15).

- i. Spurgeon detected a fault even in this belief and praise: "That is to say, they believed the promise when they saw it fulfilled, but not till then."

3. (13-15) *Because of their sin, God gave them leanness of soul.*

**They soon forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
And tested God in the desert.
And He gave them their request,
But sent leanness into their soul.**

a. **They soon forgot His works:** Israel moved quickly from faith and celebration of God's works (verse 12) to ingratitude and disobedience. Their lust after physical, material things (**lusted exceedingly**) was an important factor in this (Numbers 11).

i. **Soon forgot His works:** "In the hour of deliverance faith aided by sight is strong, and it is easy to sing. But directly strain and stress return, the past of God's might is forgotten, and His counsel is not sought." (Morgan)

ii. "Is it that way with you? You see God's miracles, but at the first sign of any new opposition you forget what God has done and are soon rebelling against what you suppose to be your hard and painful life? Then, when God saves you again, you sing his praises but soon forget even that deliverance? That is exactly what you and I are like." (Boice)

iii. **Lusted exceedingly:** The Hebrew for this phrase is simply a repetition of the word *lust* – as in, *they lusted a lust*.

b. **Tested God in the desert:** The psalmist repeated the idea from Psa 78:18, which spoke of the Israelites

testing God with their unbelief regarding His ability to provide for their needs in the wilderness.

c. **He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul:** God gave the Israelites the meat they craved (Numbers 11). Yet the meat was also sent with an associated curse, and what they wanted became something bad. The prodigal son and Lot are two other examples of those who received what they wanted, but came to ruin because of it.

i. When we allow ungodly cravings to rule our lives, God may send what we crave – and **leanness into our soul** as well. Better to deny one's self those cravings, yet enjoy a "fat" and healthy soul. "They had their desire, but their souls were starved." (Meyer)

ii. "For whoever sets his hot desires in self-willed fashion on material good, and succeeds in securing their gratification, gains...the loss of a shrivelled spiritual nature. Full-fed flesh makes starved souls." (Maclaren)

iii. **He gave them their request:** "Oh, do not seek to impose your will on God; do not insist on anything with too great vehemence; let God choose. Whenever you make request for things, which are not definitely promised, ask God not to grant them, except it be for the very best." (Meyer)

iv. The judgment mentioned here (and in Numbers 11) was strict, but it was a *help* to the Israelites because it taught them not to be ruled by their cravings and lusts. They came to call this place *Kibroth Hattaavah* – meaning, "Graves of Craving" (Num 11:34). Many since have allowed their cravings to become their graves.

4. (16-18) *Because of their sin, God sent fire and judgment.*

**When they envied Moses in the camp,
And Aaron the saint of the LORD,
The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan,
And covered the faction of Abiram.
A fire was kindled in their company;
The flame burned up the wicked.**

a. **When they envied Moses in the camp:** This refers to the rebellion led by Korah, recorded in Numbers 16. Korah believed that Moses and Aaron were arrogant and proud, accusing them: *You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?* (Num 16:3).

i. "The self-righteous attacks on Moses' spiritual and temporal leadership in Num 16:3; Num 16:13 are unmasked in the simple words, *men...were jealous*. Such directness is as characteristic of Scripture as are the elaborate self-justifications of men." (Kidner)

ii. "Who can hope to escape envy when the meekest of men was subject to it? How unreasonable was this envy, for Moses was the one man in all the camp who laboured hardest and had most to bear. They should have sympathised with him; to envy him was ridiculous." (Spurgeon)

b. **Aaron the saint of the LORD:** This was the psalmist's generosity toward an often-erring servant (as in Exodus 32, the golden calf incident). Whatever faults Aaron had, he was God's appointed priest and Korah directed his rebellion against *both* Moses and Aaron.

c. **The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan:** Korah had two leading conspirators, **Dathan** and

Abiram. Dramatically, God **opened up** the earth and they were **swallowed** in the giant crevice (Num 16:31-33).

d. **The flame burned up the wicked:** Num 16:35 describes the fire that consumed 250 men who also conspired with Korah.

5. (19-23) *Because of their sin, God set Himself against Israel.*

**They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshiped the molded image.
Thus they changed their glory
Into the image of an ox that eats grass.
They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,
Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
Awesome things by the Red Sea.
Therefore He said that He would destroy them,
Had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in
the breach,
To turn away His wrath, lest He destroy *them*.**

a. **They made a calf in Horeb:** The writer of this psalm didn't present the Exodus account in chronological order. Here he remembered Israel's sin with the golden **calf**, which happened well before the rebellion of Korah.

b. **Worshipped the molded image:** This sin of ingratitude, unbelief, idolatry, and immorality is recorded in Exodus 32. The graciousness of the psalmist toward Aaron continues in that Aaron's role in Israel's transgression is not mentioned.

c. **Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox:** Israel's idolatry with the golden calf did not actually debase *God*; it debased *them*. They lowered

themselves to be the creatures and servants of a man-made beast.

i. "The strange perverseness which turned away from such a radiance of glory to bow down before an idol is strikingly set forth by the figure of bartering it for an image and that of an ox that ate grass." (Maclaren)

ii. Paul quoted from the Septuagint translation of this phrase from Psa 106:20 in Rom 1:23, using it as a strong accusation against idolaters of all kinds. As Paul's application of this in Rom 1:23 demonstrates, "It is not Israel alone that has been guilty of the sin of idolatry. This is humanity's sin in general. We too are idolaters when we put anything but God in God's place." (Boice)

d. **They forgot God their Savior:** Their sin was not only of idolatry and immorality, but also of plain *ingratitude*. The God who did **great things, wondrous works** and **awesome things** in bringing them out of Egypt was ignored in their praise of the golden calf.

e. **Therefore He said that He would destroy them:** Exo 32:9-10 records the remarkable words of God to Moses, explaining that He would **destroy** the rebellious people of Israel and build the nation again through Moses.

i. God told Moses, "*Let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them*" (Exo 32:10). God did not ask for the opinion or participation of Moses in this matter. He simply told Moses, "*Let Me alone* so I can do this." The clear impression was that if Moses did *nothing*, the plan would go ahead.

f. **Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach:** Moses did something, not nothing. He did not fatalistically say, "Well, whatever God will do, God will

do.” Moses pleaded with the LORD, asking Him to **turn away His wrath**, because in a larger sense he believed this to be God’s heart (Exo 32:11-13). God answered the prayer of Moses, and Israel was spared.

i. **In the breach:** “The metaphor ‘stood in the breach’ derives from military language, signifying the bravery of a soldier who stands in the breach of the wall, willing to give his life in warding off the enemy (cf. Eze 22:30). So Moses stood bravely in the presence of Almighty God on behalf of Israel.” (VanGemeren)

ii. “Like a bold warrior who defends the wall when there is an opening for the adversary and destruction is rushing in upon the city, Moses stopped the way of avenging justice with his prayers.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “God had made a hedge or wall about them; but they had made a gap or breach in it by their sins, at which the Lord, who was now justly become their enemy, might enter to destroy them; which he had certainly done, if Moses by his prevailing intercession had not hindered him.” (Poole)

iv. **To turn away His wrath:** “Mighty as was the sin of Israel to provoke vengeance, prayer was mightier in turning it away. How diligently ought we to plead with the Lord for this guilty world, and especially for his own backsliding people!” (Spurgeon)

6. (24-27) Because of their sin, God overthrew them in the wilderness.

**Then they despised the pleasant land;
They did not believe His word,
But complained in their tents,
And did not heed the voice of the LORD.
Therefore He raised up His hand *in an oath* against**

**them,
To overthrow them in the wilderness,
To overthrow their descendants among the nations,
And to scatter them in the lands.**

a. **They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word:** This refers to the Israelites' sinful unbelief at Kadesh Barnea (Num 14:1-4). They did not believe the promise of God or the report of Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies (Num 13:30).

i. **Complained in their tents:** "Murmuring is a great sin and not a mere weakness; it contains within itself unbelief, pride, rebellion, and a whole host of sins. It is a home sin, and is generally practised by complainers 'in their tents,' but it is just as evil there as in the streets, and will be quite as grievous to the Lord." (Spurgeon)

b. **Did not heed the voice of the LORD:** God *promised* them the land of Canaan, no matter what the opposition. It was plain unbelief, masked by a supposed concern for their wives and children (Num 14:3).

c. **He raised up His hand in an oath against them:** God promised that the generation of unbelief in the wilderness would not inherit the land of Canaan (Num 14:22-25). That generation would die in the wilderness and the new generation would have their opportunity to take the land by faith.

i. **He raised up His hand:** "He sware, as this phrase is commonly used, as Gen 14:22, Deu 32:40, Neh 9:15, Rev 10:5-6; of this dreadful and irrevocable sentence and oath of God," (Poole)

7. (28-31) Because of their sin, God sent a plague.

**They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor,
And ate sacrifices made to the dead.**

**Thus they provoked *Him* to anger with their deeds,
And the plague broke out among them.
Then Phinehas stood up and intervened,
And the plague was stopped.
And that was accounted to him for righteousness
To all generations forevermore.**

a. **They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor:** Numbers 25 tells the story of how the young women of Moab enticed the men of Israel to idolatry and immorality at **Baal of Peor**. In their idolatry they **ate sacrifices made to the dead**.

b. **Plague broke out among them:** God sent a **plague** as a judgment against the Israelites, and the plague was only stopped when righteous **Phinehas** brought God's judgment against an Israelite man and Moabite woman apparently in the midst of immorality at or near the tabernacle itself (Num 25:6-9). This act of righteousness **stopped** the plague.

i. "This brave and decided deed was so acceptable to God as a proof that there were some sincere souls in Israel that the deadly visitation went no further."
(Spurgeon)

ii. John Trapp emphasized the truth that no one should use Phinehas as an example of taking violence against sinners: "By a secret, heroical, and extraordinary motion of God's Spirit, such as may not be drawn into example. All things reported and commended in Scripture may not be imitated."

c. **That was accounted to him for righteousness:** In recognition of his righteous act, God made a covenant regarding the priesthood with Phinehas and his descendants (Num 25:10-13).

8. (32-33) *Because of their sin, God disciplined Moses.*

**They angered *Him* also at the waters of strife,
So that it went ill with Moses on account of them;
Because they rebelled against His Spirit,
So that he spoke rashly with his lips.**

a. **They angered *Him* also at the waters of strife:** Num 20:9-11 explains how the Israelites **angered** Moses at Meribah by their complaining and contention. Nevertheless, God commanded Moses to speak to the rock (Num 20:7-8), and God promised to miraculously provide water from the rock.

b. **It went ill with Moses on account of them:** Moses did not *speak* to the rock as God commanded. In anger he *struck* the rock (Num 20:9-11). God provided the water, but Moses misrepresented God and was therefore denied entrance into the Promised Land (Num 20:12-13).

c. **Because they rebelled against His Spirit:** The author of this psalm put the emphasis on how the Israelites provoked Moses by their rebellion, which him angry. Moses was truly provoked, but God still held him responsible for *his* reaction to the provocation.

i. Spurgeon noted that sometimes congregations provoke their ministers or pastors as Israel provoked Moses. "We ought also to be very careful how we treat the ministers of the gospel, lest by provoking their spirit we should drive them into any unseemly behaviour which should bring upon them the chastisement of the Lord. Little do a murmuring, quarrelsome people dream of the perils in which they involve their pastors by their untoward behaviour."

ii. **He spoke rashly with His lips:** "For this *sentence* we have only these *two words* in the

Hebrew, *vayebatte bisephathaiv*, he stuttered or stammered with his lips, indicating that he was transported with anger." (Clarke)

9. (34-39) *Because of their sin, the land was polluted.*

**They did not destroy the peoples,
Concerning whom the LORD had commanded them,
But they mingled with the Gentiles
And learned their works;
They served their idols,
Which became a snare to them.
They even sacrificed their sons
And their daughters to demons,
And shed innocent blood,
The blood of their sons and daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
And the land was polluted with blood.
Thus they were defiled by their own works,
And played the harlot by their own deeds.**

a. **They did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them:** When the Israelites came into the Promised Land, God **commanded them to destroy** the Canaanite nations living in the land.

i. This was a unique war of judgment that God commanded Israel to perform against depraved cultures, ripe and even overdue for judgment.

b. **They mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works:** God wanted the Israelites to make war against the Canaanites to serve His purpose of judgment. But God also wanted the Canaanites removed so they would not be an evil influence upon the Israelites, leading them into the worship of their idols and their evil ways. Israel's failure to do as God commanded meant this evil influence corrupted God's people.

i. "They found evil company, and delighted in it. Those whom they should have destroyed they made their friends. Having enough faults of their own, they were yet ready to go to school to the filthy Canaanites, and educate themselves still more in the arts of iniquity." (Spurgeon)

c. **They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons:** One of the worst examples of this evil influence was Israel's worship of *Molech*, a Canaanite god sometimes worshipped with child sacrifice.

i. **To demons:** "They did not worship God, as they pretended and sometimes designed, but devils in their idols; and that those spirits which were supposed by the heathen idolaters to inhabit in their images, and which they worshipped in them, were not gods or good spirits, as they imagined, but evil spirits or devils." (Poole)

ii. **Demons:** "The devils are here called *Shedim*, destroyers (in opposition to *Shaddai*, the Almighty), and worthily; for they make it their work to waste and spoil people of their dearest children." (Trapp)

d. **The land was polluted with blood:** Until justice prevails, the blood of innocents murdered cries out to God (Gen 4:10) and pollutes a nation in the eyes of God (Num 35:33).

i. "The promised land, the holy land, which was the glory of all lands, for God was there, was defiled...by the blood red hands of their parents, who slew them in order to pay homage to devils." (Spurgeon)

e. **Thus they were defiled by their own works:** In both the *atmosphere they allowed* and the *deeds they did*, the Israelites **defiled** themselves **by their own**

works. The same statement could be said over many of God's people today.

10. (40-43) Because of their sin, God gave them to their enemies.

Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people,

So that He abhorred His own inheritance.

And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles,

And those who hated them ruled over them.

Their enemies also oppressed them,

And they were brought into subjection under their hand.

Many times He delivered them;

But they rebelled in their counsel,

And were brought low for their iniquity.

a. **Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people:** God's wrath righteously burned against the Israelites for all the sins mentioned in this long psalm. In a sense, **He abhorred His own inheritance**, and gave them over to severe correction.

i. "How far the divine wrath can burn against those whom he yet loves in his heart [is] hard to say, but certainly Israel pushed [it] to the extreme." (Spurgeon)

b. **He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles:** This seems to be a psalm of exile (especially in light of verse 46), written after the conquest and forced exile of Judah. This giving of Israel **into the hand of the Gentiles** was not merely defeat in a few battles, but their complete conquest and virtual depopulation of the land – **those who hated them ruled over them.**

i. "In their God they had found a kind master, but in those with whom they had perversely sought

fellowship they found despots of the most barbarous sort.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Many times He delivered them:** Israel’s basic *ingratitude* is once again considered. God **delivered**, but they **rebelled**. Such ingratitude could not go forever unanswered. In time – after much longsuffering from God – Israel was **brought low for their iniquity**.

C. God’s great mercy to Israel.

1. (44-46) *Because of His mercy, God heard their cry of affliction.*

**Nevertheless He regarded their affliction,
When He heard their cry;
And for their sake He remembered His covenant,
And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.**

**He also made them to be pitied
By all those who carried them away captive.**

a. **Nevertheless He regarded their affliction:** After the description of God’s correction of Israel in the previous lines, the word **nevertheless** comes as a wonderful, gracious reprieve. Despite the judgment they well deserved, God **regarded their affliction** and **remembered His covenant**.

i. “Although the people were unfaithful to him, God nevertheless was faithful to them, which is why a psalm dealing with the sins of God’s people can end on a positive note.” (Boice)

ii. "The covenant forgotten by men is none the less remembered by Him. The numberless number of His lovingkindnesses, greater than that of all men's sins, secures forgiveness after the most repeated transgressions." (Maclaren)

b. **Relented according to the multitude of His mercies:** It *might* have been different; God *could* have dealt with Israel only on the basis of their sin and His righteous judgment. While not ignoring their sin, God decided to deal with them **according to the multitude of His mercies**.

c. **He also made them to be pitied:** One aspect of God's mercy to Israel was in giving them favor with the nations where they suffered exile. **Those who carried them away captive** felt sorry for their Israelite captives and treated them accordingly.

i. "This was particularly true as to the Babylonian captivity; for *Cyrus* gave them their liberty; *Darius* favoured them, and granted them several privileges; and *Artaxerxes* sent back Nehemiah, and helped him to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple." (Clarke)

2. (47-48) *Praying to and praising the God of great mercy.*

**Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the Gentiles,
To give thanks to Your holy name,
To triumph in Your praise.
Blessed be the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD!**

a. **Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles:** This psalm seems to have been composed when the mercies of God to the Israelites in

their captivity were just beginning to be seen. The author of the psalm rightly took those early, small mercies as the basis to boldly ask for greater mercies – that their captivity would be ended and they could return to the land.

b. **To give thanks to Your holy name:** The psalmist predicted that God's people would respond gratefully, breaking the previous pattern of ingratitude. They would not forget, but **triumph in Your praise**.

i. "Penitence is never out of place in praise, nor praise in an act of penitence." (Kidner)

c. **Blessed be the LORD God of Israel:** The psalmist would not *wait* for the asked-for mercies to be evident before he began to thank and praise God. The praise started immediately, and would be given to God **from everlasting to everlasting**. This was praise that **all the peoples** should join in, saying "Hallelujah!" to God.

i. "Verse 48 therefore makes a fitting crown to a psalm whose theme has been God's steadfastness even more than man's perversity, and a doxology to conclude Book four of the Psalter." (Kidner)

Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So

Psa 107:1 "Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good; his love is eternal!"

Psa 107:2 Repeat these words in praise to the LORD, all you whom he has saved. He has rescued you from your enemies

Psa 107:3 and has brought you back from foreign countries, from east and west, from north and south.

Psa 107:4 Some wandered in the trackless desert and could not find their way to a city to live in.

Psa 107:5 They were hungry and thirsty and had given up all hope.

Psa 107:6 Then in their trouble they called to the LORD, and he saved them from their distress.

Psa 107:7 He led them by a straight road to a city where they could live.

Psa 107:8 They must thank the LORD for his constant love, for the wonderful things he did for them.

Psa 107:9 He satisfies those who are thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Psa 107:10 Some were living in gloom and darkness, prisoners suffering in chains,

Psa 107:11 because they had rebelled against the commands of Almighty God and had rejected his instructions.

Psa 107:12 They were worn out from hard work; they would fall down, and no one would help.

Psa 107:13 Then in their trouble they called to the LORD, and he saved them from their distress.

Psa 107:14 He brought them out of their gloom and darkness and broke their chains in pieces.

Psa 107:15 They must thank the LORD for his constant love, for the wonderful things he did for them.

Psa 107:16 He breaks down doors of bronze and smashes iron bars.

Psa 107:17 Some were fools, suffering because of their sins and because of their evil;

Psa 107:18 they couldn't stand the sight of food and were close to death.

Psa 107:19 Then in their trouble they called to the LORD, and he saved them from their distress.

Psa 107:20 He healed them with his command and saved them from the grave.

Psa 107:21 They must thank the LORD for his constant love, for the wonderful things he did for them.

Psa 107:22 They must thank him with sacrifices, and with songs of joy must tell all that he has done.

Psa 107:23 Some sailed over the ocean in ships, earning their living on the seas.

Psa 107:24 They saw what the LORD can do, his wonderful acts on the seas.

Psa 107:25 He commanded, and a mighty wind began to blow and stirred up the waves.

Psa 107:26 The ships were lifted high in the air and plunged down into the depths. In such danger the sailors lost their courage;

Psa 107:27 they stumbled and staggered like drunks—all their skill was useless.

Psa 107:28 Then in their trouble they called to the LORD, and he saved them from their distress.

Psa 107:29 He calmed the raging storm, and the waves became quiet.

Psa 107:30 They were glad because of the calm, and he brought them safe to the port they wanted.

Psa 107:31 They must thank the LORD for his constant love, for the wonderful things he did for them.

Psa 107:32 They must proclaim his greatness in the assembly of the people and praise him before the council of the leaders.

Psa 107:33 The LORD made rivers dry up completely and stopped springs from flowing.

Psa 107:34 He made rich soil become a salty wasteland because of the wickedness of those who lived there.

Psa 107:35 He changed deserts into pools of water and dry land into flowing springs.

Psa 107:36 He let hungry people settle there, and they built a city to live in.

Psa 107:37 They sowed the fields and planted grapevines and reaped an abundant harvest.

Psa 107:38 He blessed his people, and they had many children; he kept their herds of cattle from decreasing.

Psa 107:39 When God's people were defeated and humiliated by cruel oppression and suffering,

Psa 107:40 he showed contempt for their oppressors and made them wander in trackless deserts.

Psa 107:41 But he rescued the needy from their misery and made their families increase like flocks.

Psa 107:42 The righteous see this and are glad, but all the wicked are put to silence.

Psa 107:43 May those who are wise think about these things; may they consider the LORD's constant love.

Psalms 107:1-43

Psalms 107 – Learning from God's Deliverance to Returning Captives

This remarkable psalm praises God's deliverance in four wonderful pictures. Derek Kidner titled this psalm "God to the Rescue." The four pictures show that everyone's story is different, and yet everyone's story is the same.

"Consider the successive vignettes of this psalm. Love broods over the weary caravan that faints in the desert; visits the prison-house with its captives; watches by our beds of pain; notices each lurch of the tempest-driven vessel; brings the weary hosts from the wilderness into the fruitful soil." (F.B. Meyer)

A. Dedication of the song.

1. (1) Dedicated in gratitude to God.

**Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever.**

a. **Oh, give thanks to the LORD:** With the word **Oh**, the exhortation is stated as an exclamation. The singer of the psalm passionately pleads with his readers to give thanks to God, and for good reason. This **thanks** is directed to God because **He is good**. His goodness will be revealed throughout the rest of this psalm.

b. **For His mercy endures forever:** In the psalms as a whole, this phrase has almost a liturgical quality to it. It is used more than 30 times and is an appreciative declaration of God's people, praising the great lovingkindness – covenant love – of God.

i. "The word *endureth* has been properly supplied by the translators, but yet it somewhat restricts the sense, which will be better seen if we read it, '*for his mercy for ever.*' That mercy had no beginning, and shall never know an end." (Spurgeon)

2. (2-3) *Dedicated in light of the gathering and return of God's people.*

**Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,
And gathered out of the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.**

a. **Let the redeemed of the LORD say so:** Specifically, the psalmist invited the people of God – those **redeemed** by His enduring mercy – to declare that they *are* redeemed. It would be ungrateful and wrong to be silent about so great a work. The psalmist will describe four distinct aspects of God's redemption rescue – to the lost, to the guilty, to the sick, and to the storm-tossed. These **redeemed of the LORD** should **say so**.

i. "Moses has given us in the law a clear and full idea of what we are to understand by the word *goel*, here

rendered '*redeemed*.' If any person was either sold for a slave, or carried away for a captive, then his kinsman, who was nearest to him in blood, had the right and equity of redemption." (Romaine, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy:** We might be redeemed from the world, the flesh, the devil, or countless other snares. Here, the psalmist has in mind redemption from **the hand of the enemy**, probably connected with the exile of God's people.

c. **And gathered out of the lands:** This would be a fitting statement in the mouth of Daniel, Ezra, or Nehemiah, who had occasion to thank God for gathering a remnant of God's people from their lands of captivity.

i. **From the south:** "Hebrew, *from the sea*." (Poole)

B. God's goodness seen in His deliverance to returning captives.

1. (4-9) *Deliverance for those lost in the wilderness.*

**They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way;
They found no city to dwell in.**

**Hungry and thirsty,
Their soul fainted in them.**

**Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He delivered them out of their distresses.**

**And He led them forth by the right way,
That they might go to a city for a dwelling place.**

Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,

**And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men!
For He satisfies the longing soul,
And fills the hungry soul with goodness.**

a. **They wandered in the wilderness:** When God gathered His people (verses 2-3), they had to come to the Promised Land from every direction. Some came from the **wilderness**, and they **wandered** the **desolate** desert.

i. **Wandered:** "Their passage through the wilderness was not a journeying, such as when men pass on in a road to some inhabited place; but a *wandering* up and down away from all path and road, and so in an endless maze of desolation." (Hammond, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "They were lost in the worst possible place, even as the sinner is who is lost in sin; they wandered up and down in vain searches and researches as a sinner does when he is awakened and sees his lost estate; but it ended in nothing." (Spurgeon)

b. **Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them:** In the trouble of the wilderness, the redeemed **cried out to the LORD in their trouble**, and God answered (**He delivered them out of their distresses**).

c. **He led them forth by the right way:** Better than modern navigation systems, God **led** His redeemed to just the right place, **to a city for a dwelling place**.

i. "His deliverance is full of surprises, as he supplies all the needs of his people. He straightens the way; leads them into the city; and provides for their shelter, food, and drink." (VanGemeren)

d. **Oh, that men would give thanks:** God's goodness to those returning through the wilderness should give everyone reason to thank Him, **for His wonderful works to the children of men**. We should be able to thank God for more than just His work in our personal lives, but also for what He does for others.

e. **He satisfies the longing soul:** The psalm spoke of those **hungry and thirsty** in the wilderness, but there is also a **longing** in the **soul** of man. God's literal guidance and deliverance for His redeemed in the wilderness becomes a picture of how He delivers the lost, thirsty, and **hungry soul**, and fills it **with goodness**.

i. It seems that Mary, the mother of Jesus, quoted verse 9 (**and fills the hungry soul with goodness**) in her song: *He has filled the hungry with good things* (Luk 1:53). This is one of many scriptural quotations and allusions found in Mary's song recorded in Luk 1:46-55, showing that she was a woman who knew and loved God's word.

2. (10-16) *Deliverance for the captives.*

Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,

Bound in affliction and irons—

Because they rebelled against the words of God,

And despised the counsel of the Most High,

Therefore He brought down their heart with labor;

They fell down, and *there was* none to help.

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,

***And* He saved them out of their distresses.**

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,

And broke their chains in pieces.

Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,

***And for* His wonderful works to the children of men!**

For He has broken the gates of bronze,

And cut the bars of iron in two.

a. **Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons:** When God gathered His people (verses 2-3), they had to come to

the Promised Land from every direction. Some came from prisons and chains.

i. **In affliction and irons:** "With afflicting or grievous irons. Or, *in the cords of affliction*, as they are called, Job 36:8, and particularly in iron fetters." (Poole)

b. **Because they rebelled against the words of God:** The psalmist understood that some were imprisoned because they had **rebelled against** God. This should not be understood to mean that the psalmist believed *every one* of God's imprisoned people were there because they **despised the counsel of the Most High**, but at least in a general sense it was true.

i. The Apostle Paul later referred to himself as *the prisoner of the Lord* (Eph 4:1). These people were also prisoners of the Lord, but in a very different sense.

ii. "He delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and, as they would not be under subjection to GOD, he delivered them into slavery to wicked men.... God had forsaken them because they had forsaken him." (Clarke)

c. **They fell down, and there was none to help:** Their imprisonment was difficult, with forced labor and hardship.

i. "In eastern prisons men are frequently made to labour like beasts of the field. As they have no liberty, so they have no rest. This soon subdues the stoutest heart, and makes the proud boaster sing another tune." (Spurgeon)

d. **They cried out to the LORD in their trouble:** In their chains and hardship, God's imprisoned people begged Him for help, and He answered. **He saved them out of their distresses and broke their chains in**

pieces. This was pure grace and mercy from God; these prisoners were under God's own discipline. Yet when they **cried out** to Him, He mercifully answered.

i. "This is comfort to the greatest sinners; if they can but find a praying heart, God will find a pitying heart, and rebels shall be received with all sweetness, if at length they return, though brought in by the cross."
(Trapp)

e. **Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness:** The refrain is repeated (previously in verse 8). Seeing the gracious power of God in action should move men to **give thanks**. God has **cut the bars of iron in two** so that His people could return as He gathered them.

i. "The Lord breaks the strongest gates and bars when the time comes to set free his prisoners: and spiritually the Lord Jesus has broken the most powerful of spiritual bonds and made us free indeed. Brass and iron are [quickly consumed] before the flame of Jesus' love. The gates of hell shall not prevail against us, neither shall the bars of the grave detain us." (Spurgeon)

3. (17-22) *Deliverance for those sick and near death.*

**Fools, because of their transgression,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.
Their soul abhorred all manner of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.
Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He saved them out of their distresses.
He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered *them* from their destructions.
Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,
And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men!**

**Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And declare His works with rejoicing.**

a. **Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted:** When God gathered His people (verses 2-3), they had to come to the Promised Land from every direction. Some came from sickness and affliction, and God rescued and redeemed them – even though their trouble could be traced to their foolishness,

transgression, and iniquity.

i. **Were afflicted:** “The verb as well as its supporting phrases points to their trouble as self-inflicted. In such a context, verse 18 could well call to mind in modern times the drug-addict, but only as one example of man’s perennial determination to get hurt.” (Kidner)

ii. “Sin is at the bottom of all sorrow, but some sorrows are the immediate result of wickedness; men by a course of transgression afflict themselves and are fools for their pains.” (Spurgeon)

b. **They drew near to the gates of death:** The psalmist described those who were very sick and near death. They had no appetite (**their soul abhorred all manner of food**) and wasted away.

i. “Their ‘affliction’ is a sickness to death, when food and pleasure are no longer relevant. They ‘loathe’ their ‘food,’ as they feel that death is nearby.” (VanGemeren)

ii. By spiritual analogy, when a sick soul has no appetite for the milk or meat of God’s word, it shows that spiritual death is near.

iii. “We may pray about our bodily pains and weaknesses, and we may look for answers too. When

we have no appetite for meat we may have an appetite for prayer.” (Spurgeon)

c. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble:

This phrase is again repeated (before in verses 6 and 13). Even when God’s people are in trouble because of their own wrongdoing, God answers when they cry out unto Him.

d. He sent His word and healed them: They were healed by the power of God’s word, reminding us of the many times Jesus healed people simply by speaking a word. These sick and afflicted ones were **delivered** from **their destructions** by the powerful word of God.

i. “When George Wishart arrived at Dundee, where the plague was raging [1545], he caused intimation to be made that he would preach; and for that purpose chose his station upon the head of the East-gate, the infected persons standing without, and those that were whole within. His text was Psa 107:20, ‘*He sent his word, and healed them,*’ etc., wherein he treated of the profit and comfort of God’s word, the punishment that comes by contempt of it, the readiness of God’s mercy to such as truly turn to him, and the happiness of those whom God takes from this misery, etc. By which sermon he so raised up the hearts of those that heard him, that they regarded not death, but judged them more happy that should then depart, rather than such as should remain behind, considering that they knew not whether they should have such a comforter with them.” (Samuel Clarke, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. “All that God has to do, in order to save us, is to send us his word. He has done that by sending his dear Son, who is the incarnate Word. He sends us the word in the shape of the Holy Scriptures; he sends us

the word in the preaching of his servants; but what we want most of all is to have that word sent home by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Spurgeon)

e. **Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness:** Once again the psalmist encourages all men to give thanks to God for His deliverance.

4. (23-32) *Deliverance for those on dangerous seas.*

**Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters,
They see the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
For He commands and raises the stormy wind,
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.
They mount up to the heavens,
They go down again to the depths;
Their soul melts because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.
Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brings them out of their distresses.
He calms the storm,
So that its waves are still.
Then they are glad because they are quiet;
So He guides them to their desired haven.
Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD for His
goodness,
And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men!
Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people,
And praise Him in the company of the elders.**

a. **Those who go down to the sea in ships:** When God gathered His people (verses 2-3), they had to come to the Promised Land from every direction. Some came over the **sea in ships**.

b. **They see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep:** On the seas, the returning captives see the greatness of God. They also see the great storms that raise **the waves of the sea** as high as **the heavens**, and plunge down again **to the depths**. It is not surprising that the **soul** of the unfortunate traveler on the stormy sea **melts because of trouble**.

i. "I have been at sea in the storm, and in the circumstances I describe; and, having *cried to the Lord in my trouble*, I am spared to describe the storm, and recount the tale of his mercy. None but either a man inspired by God, who, in describing, will show things *as they are*, or one who has been actually in these circumstances, can tell you with what propriety the psalmist speaks, or utter the thousandth part of the dangers and fearful apprehensions of those concerned in a tempest at sea, where all the winds of heaven seem collected to urge an already crazy vessel among the most tremendous rocks upon a lee shore! God save the reader from such circumstances!" (Clarke)

ii. **Stagger like a drunken man:** "The violent motion of the vessel prevents their keeping their legs, and their fears drive them out of all power to use their brains, and therefore they look like intoxicated men." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Are at their wits' end:** "All their skills at navigation are ineffective so that they become desperate ('at their wit's end,' literally, 'all their wisdom was swallowed up')." (VanGemeren)

iv. Writing in the 17th century, Trapp described these **works** and **wonders**: "...in sea monsters, as whales and whirlpools, and sudden change of weather, and the like, not a few; ebbs and flows, pearls, islands,

etc. These are just wonders, and may fully convince the most stubborn atheist that is."

c. **They cry out to the LORD in their trouble:** Once again, the psalmist described how God's people **cry out to the LORD**, and **He brings them out of their distress**.

i. "We cannot help reflecting, that there is a ship in which we are all embarked; there is a troubled sea on which we all sail; there are storms by which we are all frequently overtaken; and there is a haven which we all desire to behold and enter." (Horne)

d. **He calms the storm, so that its waves are still:** God does what only God can do – calm the stormy sea by His command. This reminds us again of what Jesus did to calm the stormy Sea of Galilee by His own word and will.

i. Wild as it is, the sea obeys God's command. Trapp observed that if we "...will not be pacified when the Lord saith unto us, 'Be still'; every drop of water in the sea will be a witness of our monstrous rebellion and disobedience."

e. **Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness:** For the fourth and final time, the psalmist encourages all men to give thanks to God for His deliverance. This time God's people are encouraged to **exalt Him also in the assembly of the people**, praising Him among the people of God.

i. **In the company of the elders:** "Let them not be ashamed nor afraid to speak of God's wonderful works and praises before the greatest of men." (Poole)

C. God's goodness seen in His transformations.

1. (33-38) *God's work in transforming the earth.*

**He turns rivers into a wilderness,
And the watersprings into dry ground;
A fruitful land into barrenness,
For the wickedness of those who dwell in it.
He turns a wilderness into pools of water,
And dry land into watersprings.
There He makes the hungry dwell,
That they may establish a city for a dwelling place,
And sow fields and plant vineyards,
That they may yield a fruitful harvest.
He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly;
And He does not let their cattle decrease.**

a. **He turns rivers into a wilderness:** The God who has authority over the stormy seas can also transform creation itself. The transformation can be from good to bad (**a fruitful land into barrenness**) if the goal is the judgment of the **wicked**.

i. "The plain of Jordan, which, before the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, was well watered everywhere, 'like the garden of Jehovah,' Gen 13:10, hath, since that overthrow, been a land of salt and sulphur, and perpetual sterility." (Horne)

ii. Charles Spurgeon wrote in the 19th century, before Israel was gathered again as a nation in their land: "This has been done in many instances, and notably in the case of the Psalmist's own country, which was once the glory of all lands and is now almost a desert." (Spurgeon)

b. **He turns a wilderness into pools of water:** God's power to transform can also be used to transform from bad to good. **Dry land** can be turned into **watersprings**, into places of fruitfulness and civilization.

i. "The hymn of praise ascribes to the Lord the power to change things. His authority is limitless.... He can reverse the condition of anything and therefore the way of life of everybody!" (VanGemeren)

c. He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly:

The psalmist relied upon God not only for the gathering of God's people from the captivity, but for His blessing and good transformation of the land when they returned to it. It had to be God's blessing *continually*.

i. "Things which appear contradictory are seen as evidences of consistency. Jehovah turns fruitful places into a wilderness; He turns the wilderness into a fruitful place.... He blesses and multiplies a people." (Morgan)

2. (39-42) *God's work in transforming those oppressed and afflicted.*

**When they are diminished and brought low
Through oppression, affliction and sorrow,
He pours contempt on princes,
And causes them to wander in the wilderness *where there is no way*;
Yet He sets the poor on high, far from affliction,
And makes *their* families like a flock.
The righteous see *it* and rejoice,
And all iniquity stops its mouth.**

a. **He pours contempt on princes:** In the same way that God can turn a river into a dry wilderness, He can take the **princes** of this world and bring them low, causing them **to wander in the wilderness**. This is especially true of those rulers who subject God's people under

oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

b. **Yet He sets the poor on high:** In the same way that God can turn a wilderness into pools of water, He can also lift up the **poor**, setting them up **far from affliction** and making **their families like a flock**.

i. "The final section reflects in a distant, settled way on God's sovereign workings by which his people are sometimes lifted up and sometimes brought low."
(Boice)

c. **The righteous see it and rejoice:** God's righteous ones are happy that He knows how to bring low the proud and oppressive, and that He knows how to lift up the poor and afflicted. When the judgments of God operate this way, people notice and **all iniquity stops its mouth**.

i. **All iniquity stops its mouth:** As it says in Job 5:16, *injustice shuts her mouth*. It will be a wonderful day when **iniquity** and injustice are silent.

3. (43) *Conclusion: wisdom and understanding.*

**Whoever is wise will observe these things,
And they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.**

a. **Whoever is wise will observe these things:** The psalmist invited us to look at the way God works in the world, both in responding to those who cry out to Him and in His ability to bring low and raise high. Wisdom tells us to take notice.

i. "It is himself that the reader is to recognize in the fourfold picture of plight and salvation, and it is the steadfastness of God that he is now to praise with new insight." (Kidner)

ii. "It is a great song of the mercy of God. Let its message be heeded, then shall we cry unto God in our distress, and finding deliverance through His

goodness, we shall give Him thanks and praise Him.” (Morgan)

iii. “The conclusion to this psalm transforms the hymn of thanksgiving and praise to a wisdom psalm. The righteous will become wise by studying the acts of the Lord in the affairs of man.” (VanGemeren)

b. And they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD: We understand the *hesed* (**lovingkindness**, loyal love, covenant love) of God by the statements and promises of His word. But we also understand it by how He acts among men and in history – *if* we have the wisdom to see it. With this wisdom, we **will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD**.

i. **And they will understand:** “All things work together for good to them that love God’; and the more they love Him, the more clearly will they see, and the more happily will they feel, that so it is. How can a man contemplate the painful riddle of the world, and keep his sanity, without that faith? He who has it for his faith will have it for his experience.” (Maclaren)

With God We Shall Do Valiantly

Psa 108:1 I have complete confidence, O God! I will sing and praise you! Wake up, my soul!

Psa 108:2 Wake up, my harp and lyre! I will wake up the sun.

Psa 108:3 I will thank you, O LORD, among the nations. I will praise you among the peoples.

Psa 108:4 Your constant love reaches above the heavens; your faithfulness touches the skies.

Psa 108:5 Show your greatness in the sky, O God, and your glory over all the earth.

Psa 108:6 Save us by your might; answer my prayer, so that the people you love may be rescued.

Psa 108:7 From his sanctuary God has said, "In triumph I will divide Shechem and distribute Sukkoth Valley to my people.

Psa 108:8 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh too; Ephraim is my helmet and Judah my royal scepter.

Psa 108:9 But I will use Moab as my washbowl, and I will throw my sandals on Edom, as a sign that I own it. I will shout in triumph over the Philistines."

Psa 108:10 Who, O God, will take me into the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

Psa 108:11 Have you really rejected us? Aren't you going to march out with our armies?

Psa 108:12 Help us against the enemy; human help is worthless.

Psa 108:13 With God on our side we will win; he will defeat our enemies.

Psalms 108:1-13

Psalms 108 – Praise and Trust from the Past for Today

*This psalm is titled **A Song. A Psalm of David**. It is actually a compilation of sections from two other psalms. Psa 108:1-5 is very similar to Psa 57:7-11, and Psa 108:6-13 is almost identical to Psa 60:5-12. These are David's words, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, taken and applied to a present challenge. The enemies specified in Psa 108:9-13 are Moab, Edom, and Philistia (with the emphasis on Edom). It may be that the old foe, subdued earlier in David's day, rose again and Israel must defeat her again.*

Psalms 108 shows us that we can and should use the words of Scripture as our present prayers and praises, suitable to our present situation.

"This is not a new song, save in its arrangement." (G. Campbell Morgan)

"The Holy Spirit is not so short of expressions that he needs to repeat himself, and the repetition cannot be meant merely to fill the book: there must be some intention in the arrangement of two former divine utterances in a new connection." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. The declaration of God's praise.

1. (1-2) The earnest nature of David's praise to God.

O God, my heart is steadfast;

I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

Awake, lute and harp!

I will awaken the dawn.

a. **My heart is steadfast:** As in Psa 57:7, David sang of the strength of his heart in God. His **steadfast** confidence in God gave him a fixed point from which he could and would **sing and give praise**.

b. **Even with my glory:** David praised God with the best of his being. Whatever **glory** belonged to David, he directed it toward God in praise.

c. **Awake, lute and harp:** The earnest praise offered to God was *musical*. David was a skilled musician (1Sa 16:18), and it could be said that this skill was part of his **glory** – so he offered it to God in praise.

i. **Lute and harp:** "The *Psaltery* [**lute**] was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. The *harp* or lyre was a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. It appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

d. **I will awaken the dawn:** David was determined to give God the best in praise, so he gave unto God the choice part of the day. David let the sound of his praise greet the **dawn** as it rose in the early morning hours.

i. David was awake, so he could **awaken the dawn**. "Some singers had need to awake, for they sing in drawling tones, as if they were half asleep; the tune drags wearily along, there is no feeling or sentiment in the singing, but the listener hears only a dull mechanical sound.... Oh, choristers, wake up, for this is not a work for dreamers, but such as requires your best powers in their liveliest condition." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) *The wide audience of David's praise.*

**I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples,
And I will sing praises to You among the nations.
For Your mercy *is* great above the heavens,
And Your truth *reaches* to the clouds.**

a. **I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples:** David directed his praise to Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel. Yet he was praising Yahweh in the presence of the people of Israel (**the peoples**) or **among the nations**. His praise was not secret, but open and public.

b. **For Your mercy is great above the heavens:** The large audience was appropriate because of the large nature of God's great **mercy** (*hesed*, lovingkindness, loyal love, or covenant love). David understood that the **mercy** of God was so great that if it were to be measured, it would extend **above the heavens**, and His **truth** would reach **to the clouds**.

i. "God *is* exalted above the heavens. His glory *does* fill the earth. The goal of history is that God might be known as God and be honored for it." (Boice)

3. (5-6) *A cry of exaltation to God.*

**Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
And Your glory above all the earth;
That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save *with* Your right hand, and hear me.**

a. **Be exalted, O God:** If the measure of God's mercy and truth are high above the heavens and the clouds, then the honor and recognition to God should also be that great. A God of great mercy and truth is worthy of great praise and recognition of **glory**.

b. **That Your beloved may be delivered:** David's praise transformed into a prayer, asking that he would be rescued from his present distress. The opening of Psalms 108 is so filled with praise that we didn't even know David was in trouble. He only mentioned his distress after setting his heart and mind right with praise from his entire being.

c. **Your beloved:** David understood that God loved him, and he appealed to God on that basis. David's mind understood that there were many others that God loved, but his heart came to God as if he were the only one, not one of many. **Beloved** (Hebrew, *yadid*) was the meaning David's own name – *dawid*, which means *beloved*.

i. **Beloved:** "The Hebrew word belongs to the language of love poetry; it appeals to the strongest of bonds, the most ardent of relationships." (Kidner)

d. **Save with Your right hand:** The **right hand** is regarded as the hand of skill and strength. God's rescue could not come through half measures. David called upon God to bring all His skill and strength into his rescue.

B. The declaration of God's victory.

1. (7-8) *God's dominion over Israel and its land.*

**God has spoken in His holiness:
“I will rejoice;
I will divide Shechem
And measure out the Valley of Succoth.
Gilead *is* Mine; Manasseh *is* Mine;
Ephraim also *is* the helmet for My head;
Judah *is* My lawgiver.**

a. **God has spoken in His holiness:** David was a prophet (Act 2:30) and was about to prophesy of Yahweh’s ultimate victory over all nations. He began by noting that this proclamation came from God’s **holiness** – His quality and character of being separate and set apart from all His creation.

b. **I will rejoice:** God’s victory over all nations will make Him happy. He will not perform this reluctantly.

c. **I will divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succoth:** These verses refer to both a city and a region in Israel. God declared His sovereignty over the land; He would **divide** and **measure** it as He pleased. Comprehensively, the regions of greater Israel (including **Gilead** and **Manasseh** on the east side of the Jordan River, and the central sections of **Judah** and **Ephraim**) were under His dominion.

d. **Ephraim also is the helmet for My head:** The tribe of **Ephraim** descended from Joseph and was one of the prominent tribes of Israel. Sometimes the northern tribes were collectively called **Ephraim**, after this large and influential tribe. **Ephraim** was like a **helmet**, expressing God’s strength and security.

i. “As *Ephraim* was the most populous of all the tribes, he appropriately terms it *the strength of his head*, that is, of his dominions.” (Calvin, cited in Spurgeon)

e. **Judah is My lawgiver:** If Ephraim expressed God's strength, the tribe of Judah expressed His *rule* and *government*, as a **lawgiver**. **Judah** was the tribe of King David and later of Jesus the Messiah.

2. (9) *God's dominion over the nations.*

**Moab is My washpot;
Over Edom I will cast My shoe;
Over Philistia I will triumph."**

a. **Moab is My washpot:** Yahweh was not merely a local deity with authority over Israel alone. He was the God of all the nations, and David recognized that by mentioning three neighboring kingdoms. God would use **Moab** as it pleased Him, and if it were for humble service like a pot for washing feet, then so be it. David did conquer Moab (2Sa 8:2).

i. Both Moab and Edom were noted for their pride (Isa 16:6, Oba 1:3). Here God gives them places of humble service. "The picture of Moab coming with a washbasin for the warrior to wash his feet represents her subjugation to servant status." (VanGemeren)

b. **Over Edom I will cast My shoe:** In a day when roads and paths were dirty and covered with refuse of all kinds, a person's shoes were regarded with contempt. If God wanted to throw a dirty **shoe** over **Edom** as an expression of His contempt, He had the power and right to do it. With God's power, David did conquer Edom (2Sa 8:14).

i. "*Will I cast out my shoe*, i.e. I will use them like slaves; either holding forth my shoes, that they may pluck them off; or throwing my shoes at them, either in anger or contempt, as the manner of many masters was and is in such cases." (Poole)

c. **Over Philistia I will triumph:** God's dominion would also be expressed over these long and bitter enemies of Israel. God helping, David did conquer the Philistines (2Sa 8:1).

3. (10-13) *Trust in God and the help He will bring.*

Who will bring me *into* the strong city?

Who will lead me to Edom?

Is it not You, O God, who cast us off?

And You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?

Give us help from trouble,

For the help of man is useless.

Through God we will do valiantly,

For *it is* He *who* shall tread down our enemies.

a. **Who will bring me into the strong city?** This psalm appears to have been composed and sung on the eve of battle. Before David confronted a **strong city** of Edom, he praised God and expressed his total confidence in God's dominion over Israel *and* the pagan nations.

b. **The strong city:** The most notable **strong city** among the Edomites was the famous Petra. We have no record of David attacking or conquering that city. If **the strong city** refers to Petra, perhaps David did conquer it, but it is not in the Biblical record. Or, David may mean Petra as simply an example of what seemed to be an unconquerable city that could not resist God's power if He willed it.

i. "There were a number of well-fortified cities in Edom, the source of the country's strength and great pride, but when the psalm speaks of *the* fortified city it can only mean Petra, the legendary, inaccessible, and apparently impregnable mountain stronghold of Edom." (Boice)

ii. This is an important and eternal principle: That which seems unconquerable can be overcome by the power of God.

c. **Is it not You, O God, who cast us off?** David prayed this prayer in light of recent defeats, recognizing that those defeats came because God's favor did not shine upon Israel's armies. If God

did not go out with our armies, there was no hope for victory – **for the help of man is useless**.

i. **The help of man is useless**: David had seen many brave men accomplish great things on the field of battle. Yet for David and for Israel, the help of man was not enough; indeed, it was **useless**. God's help would lead them to victory.

ii. "The king is not looking for a military solution to his problems, such as alliances with other kings, because he knows that their 'help is worthless'." (VanGemeren)

iii. "We ought to pray with all the more confidence in God when our confidence in man is altogether gone. When the help of man is vain, we shall not find it vain to seek the help of God." (Spurgeon)

d. **Through God we will do valiantly**: David's formula was simple. Without God, they could do nothing. With and **through God**, they could win great victories and accomplish great things. The victory belonged to God (**it is He who shall tread down our enemies**); it was Israel's place to praise God and bring themselves into right relationship with Him. This was the goal of this psalm, and we can suppose that it accomplished its purpose and the battle David faced was won.

i. David understood that it was not for Israel to avoid fighting and passively see what God would do.

Instead, they would fight, but fight **through God**. Their fighting through God would be brave and valiant, and in it they would see God **tread down our enemies**.

ii. **We will do valiantly**: "Divine working is not an argument for human inaction, but rather it is the best excitement for courageous effort." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Through God we will do valiantly**: "What, then, is the meaning of this word? That God will overcome Edom? By no means. Rather that the people who are of fixed heart in God will themselves do the valiant deed, but that they will do it through Him. This is ever the way of victory." (Morgan)

iv. **It is He who shall tread down our enemies**: "Faith is neither a coward nor a sluggard she knows that God is with her, and therefore she does valiantly; she knows that he will tread down her enemies, and therefore she arises to tread them down in his name." (Spurgeon)

Help Me, O Lord My God

Psa 109:1 I praise you, God; don't remain silent!

Psa 109:2 Wicked people and liars have attacked me. They tell lies about me,

Psa 109:3 and they say evil things about me, attacking me for no reason.

Psa 109:4 They oppose me, even though I love them and have prayed for them.

Psa 109:5 They pay me back evil for good and hatred for love.

Psa 109:6 Choose some corrupt judge to try my enemy, and let one of his own enemies accuse him.

Psa 109:7 May he be tried and found guilty; may even his prayer be considered a crime!

Psa 109:8 May his life soon be ended; may someone else take his job!

Psa 109:9 May his children become orphans, and his wife a widow!

Psa 109:10 May his children be homeless beggars; may they be driven from the ruins they live in!

Psa 109:11 May his creditors take away all his property, and may strangers get everything he worked for.

Psa 109:12 May no one ever be kind to him or care for the orphans he leaves behind.

Psa 109:13 May all his descendants die, and may his name be forgotten in the next generation.

Psa 109:14 May the LORD remember the evil of his ancestors and never forgive his mother's sins.

Psa 109:15 May the LORD always remember their sins, but may they themselves be completely forgotten!

Psa 109:16 That man never thought of being kind; he persecuted and killed the poor, the needy, and the helpless.

Psa 109:17 He loved to curse—may he be cursed! He hated to give blessings—may no one bless him!

Psa 109:18 He cursed as naturally as he dressed himself; may his own curses soak into his body like water and into his bones like oil!

Psa 109:19 May they cover him like clothes and always be around him like a belt!

Psa 109:20 LORD, punish my enemies in that way—those who say such evil things against me!

Psa 109:21 But my Sovereign LORD, help me as you have promised, and rescue me because of the goodness of your love.

Psa 109:22 I am poor and needy; I am hurt to the depths of my heart.

Psa 109:23 Like an evening shadow I am about to vanish; I am blown away like an insect.

Psa 109:24 My knees are weak from lack of food; I am nothing but skin and bones.

Psa 109:25 When people see me, they laugh at me; they shake their heads in scorn.

Psa 109:26 Help me, O LORD my God; because of your constant love, save me!

Psa 109:27 Make my enemies know that you are the one who saves me.

Psa 109:28 They may curse me, but you will bless me. May my persecutors be defeated, and may I, your servant, be glad.

Psa 109:29 May my enemies be covered with disgrace; may they wear their shame like a robe.

Psa 109:30 I will give loud thanks to the LORD; I will praise him in the assembly of the people,

Psa 109:31 because he defends the poor and saves them from those who condemn them to death.

Psalms 109:1-31

Psalms 109 – A Prophecy of Vengeance Against Hateful Enemies

*Psalms 109 is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** Some think the **Chief Musician** was the choirmaster for King David; others think it was a poetic reference to God Himself, the author of music itself.*

*This is a **Psalm of David**, and is thought to be the strongest of what are known as the imprecatory psalms, David's songs that call down curses upon his enemies. It is important to remember that these are prayers, committing vengeance unto God. With the greater revelation of grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, we understand that we*

are to pray for the good of our enemies, and not for their ruin.

Yet, we remind ourselves that David refused to act upon these curses; he left vengeance up to God. This is especially relevant regarding David, who knew what it was to take life with the sword. When David withheld vengeance, it was because he chose to, not because he lacked the opportunity, skill, or courage.

A. A prayer for deliverance.

1. (1-3) Deliverance from the hatred of enemies.

Do not keep silent,

O God of my praise!

For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful

Have opened against me;

They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

**They have also surrounded me with words of hatred,
And fought against me without a cause.**

a. **Do not keep silent, O God of my praise:** David was once again in trouble, beset by many enemies. The **mouth of the wicked** spoke against him, so he prayed that God would not be **silent**. He did not want the **mouth of the deceitful** to have the last word.

i. **O God of my praise:** "A resolute stand taken before the troubled thoughts surge in. The psalm will feel its way back to this vantage point, but only regain it in the last two verses." (Kidner)

b. **Fought against me without a cause:** David was confident in his own innocence in reference to his enemies. Their harsh words were spoken **with a lying tongue**, and their **words of hatred** were **without a cause**.

i. "There is nothing more easy than to wag a wicked tongue." (Trapp)

ii. "In all Satan's armoury there are no worse weapons than deceitful tongues." (Spurgeon)

2. (4-5) *Deliverance from the ingratitude of those who hate.*

**In return for my love they are my accusers,
But I *give myself to prayer*.**

**Thus they have rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love.**

a. **In return for my love they are my accusers:** In the previous lines David insisted that the hatred of his enemies against him was without cause. Here he further explained that he extended **love** to these adversaries, but they gave David **evil for good, and hatred for...love**.

i. **Accusers** is the same basic Hebrew word that we also translate *Satan* – the accuser. "Hebrew, they satanically hate me. To render evil for evil is brutish, but to render evil for good is devilish." (Trapp)

b. **But I give myself to prayer:** David's response was proper, even using a New Testament understanding. The following lines are filled with bitter wishes that form something of a prophecy of doom against these enemies. Yet David *did* nothing to bring this doom against these enemies. That was God's work, not his own. As for David, he would **give** himself **to prayer** and leave it with the LORD.

i. "The Hebrew is more abrupt and therefore even stronger. It says literally, 'But I prayer.' That is, 'I am all prayer or characterized by prayer. While my enemies are uttering false words about me to other people, trying to do me harm, I am speaking to God. I am praying to God always.'" (Boice)

ii. "He did nothing else but pray. He became prayer as they became malice. This was his answer to his enemies, he appealed from men and their injustice to the Judge of all the earth, who must do right."
(Spurgeon)

B. A prophecy of doom.

1. (6-13) *Destruction upon the enemy's family.*

**Set a wicked man over him,
And let an accuser stand at his right hand.
When he is judged, let him be found guilty,
And let his prayer become sin.
Let his days be few,
And let another take his office.
Let his children be fatherless,
And his wife a widow.
Let his children continually be vagabonds, and beg;
Let them seek *their bread* also from their desolate
places.
Let the creditor seize all that he has,
And let strangers plunder his labor.
Let there be none to extend mercy to him,
Nor let there be any to favor his fatherless children.
Let his posterity be cut off,
And in the generation following let their name be
blotted out.**

a. **Set a wicked man over him:** David now speaks of his enemy in the singular, either having in mind the leader of the larger group mentioned in verses 1-5, or making a single target out of many. When David prophesied doom over his enemy, he began with the wish that in judgment his enemies would be ruled by a **wicked man**. Ungodly leadership is a form of God's judgment upon a people.

i. This begins a long and intense set of curses that David pronounced against his enemy. There are some who think that verses 6-20 describe the lying words that David's enemies spoke against *him*, and that the use of the singular in that section proves it – as well as later in verse 20. Morgan had this opinion: "I entirely agree with those expositors who treat this passage as the singer's quotation of the language of his enemies against him."

ii. The main argument *against* this approach is how Peter, in Act 1:20, quoted Psa 109:8, applying the verse to an evil man rightly condemned (Judas) and not to an innocent man wrongly condemned.

iii. "We therefore take these words to be David's own, and while giving due weight to the element of righteous anger and of rhetorical hyperbole, we see them as comparable to the outbursts of Jeremiah and Job: recorded for our learning, not for our imitation; yet voicing the cry of innocent blood which God is pledged to hear." (Kidner)

iv. It is fair to note that the tone of these curses are generally in the form of *prophecies* rather than immediate curses. David predicted the righteous judgment to come rather than pronouncing it – though, he certainly wished for this judgment.

v. "David was well known, even praised, for being a nonvindictive, long-suffering, and merciful man. We have only to think of the two occasions when David could have killed his archenemy King Saul if he had wanted to (1 Sam. 24, 26). David did not even think of killing Saul. He said instead, 'I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the Lord's anointed' (1 Sam. 24:10). All the imprecatory psalms have the flavor of Rom 12:19 : "'It is mine to avenge; I will

repay," says the Lord.' They leave the execution of justice in God's hands." (Boice)

b. **Let an accuser stand at his right hand:** The curse David had in mind was of an **accuser** or adversary standing in the place of aid and help; the guilty one would be left without help and instead would have *Satan at his right hand* (considering that the Hebrew word for **accuser** is *Satan*).

c. **When he is judged, let him be found guilty:** David thought of every possible calamity that could come upon his enemy. In the court of law, he would be **guilty**. When he prayed, the **prayer** itself would **become sin**. His life would be short and another would occupy **his office**.

i. The phrase **let another take his office** was, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, quoted by Peter to determine that the apostles should replace Judas in their apostolic number (Act 1:20). The hateful enemy described by David was certainly a preview of Judas, who fought against Jesus without cause (Psa 109:3) and rewarded the good Jesus did to him with evil (as in verse 5).

d. **Let his children be fatherless:** David prophesied that the doom to come upon this hateful enemy would extend to his families. His short life meant his children would be orphans **and his wife a widow**. His orphan children would suffer great poverty and themselves have cursed lives (**in the generation following let their name be blotted out**).

i. "Psa 109:10-15 extend the maledictions to the enemy's children and parents, in accordance with the ancient strong sense of family solidarity, which was often expressed in practice by visiting the kindred of a

convicted criminal with ruin, and levelling his house with the ground." (Maclaren)

ii. "We are staggered to find the children included in the father's sentence, and yet as a matter of fact children do suffer for their father's sins, and, as long as the affairs of this life are ordered as they are, it must be so." (Spurgeon)

iii. "A breach of the covenant resulted in the execution of the curses, including famine, sickness, exile, and death (Lev 26:14-39). Thus the psalmist prays that the Lord's word will be fulfilled with regard to the profligate." (VanGemeren)

2. (14-20) Destruction against the enemy's many sins.

Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD,

And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

Let them be continually before the LORD,

That He may cut off the memory of them from the earth;

Because he did not remember to show mercy,

But persecuted the poor and needy man,

That he might even slay the broken in heart.

As he loved cursing, so let it come to him;

As he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him.

As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment,

So let it enter his body like water,

And like oil into his bones.

Let it be to him like the garment which covers him,

And for a belt with which he girds himself continually.

Let this *be* the LORD's reward to my accusers,

And to those who speak evil against my person.

a. **Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD:** David hoped that the sins of his enemy's ancestors would also be held against his enemy, and that the remembrance of those sins would be **continually before the LORD**.

b. **Because he did not remember to show mercy:** This enemy and his companions despised the goodness David extended to them (verse 5). Yet the hateful ways went beyond the wrong done to David; he also **persecuted the poor and needy**.

i. Matthew Poole thought that the **poor and needy man** was David himself, "who was desolate and miserable, who required pity, and not additions of cruelty." (Poole)

c. **That he might even slay the broken in heart:** This merciless cruelty to the **broken in heart** was completely contrary to the nature of God. *The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart (Psa 34:18)*; God never despises a broken heart (*Psa 51:17*).

d. **As he loved cursing, so let it come to him:** David's prayer was rooted in simple justice. He wanted God to do to this enemy what that guilty man had done to others. David wanted the man to be clothed with curses.

i. "The wicked's love for cursing became so much a part of him that the psalmist describes it as if 'he wore cursing as his garment'." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Retaliation, not for private revenge, but as a measure of public justice, is demanded by the Psalmist and deserved by the crime. Surely the malicious man cannot complain if he is judged by his own rule, and has his corn measured with his own bushel." (Spurgeon)

e. Let this be the LORD's reward to my accusers:

This emphasizes that this is a *prayer* from David. As he said in verse 4, he would pray and leave the matter to the Lord. David wished and prophesied this doom; but it would be God's job to perform it.

- i. "All these maledictions shall be fulfilled on my enemies; they shall have them for their reward."
(Clarke)

C. A plea for help.

1. (21-25) *Help requested because of weakness.*

**But You, O GOD the Lord,
Deal with me for Your name's sake;
Because Your mercy is good, deliver me.
For I am poor and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.
I am gone like a shadow when it lengthens;
I am shaken off like a locust.
My knees are weak through fasting,
And my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness.
I also have become a reproach to them;
When they look at me, they shake their heads.**

a. **Deal with me for Your name's sake:** David understood that it wasn't enough to have his enemy judged. David needed help from God, from Yahweh Adonai. David asked on the basis of God's **name** and **mercy**, not on the basis of his own righteousness.

b. **My heart is wounded within me:** David was **poor and needy**, and shows that he was the one *broken in heart* mentioned in verse 16.

c. **I am gone like a shadow when it lengthens:** David's misery was also physical. He felt his life was wasting away, complaining that his **flesh** was **feeble**

from lack of fatness. The hateful enemy either caused this physical weakness or took advantage of it.

d. **When they look at me, they shake their heads:** People looked at David in his sorry condition and despised him (**become a reproach**), shaking their heads in both pity and disgust.

2. (26-29) *Help requested with a heart for God's glory.*

Help me, O LORD my God!

Oh, save me according to Your mercy,

That they may know that this is Your hand—

***That* You, LORD, have done it!**

Let them curse, but You bless;

When they arise, let them be ashamed,

But let Your servant rejoice.

Let my accusers be clothed with shame,

And let them cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle.

a. **Help me, O LORD my God:** David's plea was straightforward and simple. Like the woman of Canaan with the demon-possessed daughter (Mat 15:21-25), he asked God for **help**. As in verse 21, he asked for it on the basis of God's **mercy**, not his own merit.

b. **That they may know that this is Your hand:** It was very important to David that his enemies and all who looked on him knew that his rescue was from God's **hand**; the **LORD** had **done it**. He didn't want deliverance only for his own sake, but also for the glory of God.

i. **That this is Your hand:** "Ungodly men will not see God's hand in anything if they can help it, and when they see good men delivered into their power they become more confirmed than ever in their atheism; but all in good time God will arise and so effectually

punish their malice and rescue the object of their spite that they will be compelled to say like the Egyptian magicians, ‘*this* is the finger of God.’” (Spurgeon)

c. **Let them curse, but You bless:** David understood that the curses of his enemies could never triumph over the blessings of God in his life. This would make David **rejoice** and his enemies **be clothed with shame**, wearing their **disgrace** as if it were a **mantle**.

3. (30-31) *Confidently praising God for His answer.*

**I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth;
Yes, I will praise Him among the multitude.
For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor,
To save *him* from those who condemn him.**

a. **I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth:** David’s heart was to see God honored in this deliverance. He would praise God vocally and publicly (**among the multitude**).

i. “The psalm began with addressing ‘the God of my praise’; it ends with the confidence and the vow that the singer will yet praise Him. It painted an adversary standing at the right hand of the wicked to condemn him; it ends with the assurance that Jehovah stands at the right hand of His afflicted servant, as his advocate to protect him.” (Maclaren)

b. **He shall stand at the right hand of the poor:** God is to be praised for His love and care for **the poor** and for those oppressed by such hateful enemies who **condemn** the righteous.

i. The One who **shall stand** is “...replacing the figure of the accuser, who stands at the right hand of his victim, by the figure of God who *stands at the right*

hand of the needy in a very different sense. It is the complete answer." (Kidner)

Sit at My Right Hand

Psa 110:1 The LORD said to my lord, "Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet."

Psa 110:2 From Zion the LORD will extend your royal power. "Rule over your enemies," he says.

Psa 110:3 On the day you fight your enemies, your people will volunteer. Like the dew of early morning your young men will come to you on the sacred hills.

Psa 110:4 The LORD made a solemn promise and will not take it back: "You will be a priest forever in the priestly order of Melchizedek."

Psa 110:5 The Lord is at your right side; when he becomes angry, he will defeat kings.

Psa 110:6 He will pass judgment on the nations and fill the battlefield with corpses; he will defeat kings all over the earth.

Psa 110:7 The king will drink from the stream by the road, and strengthened, he will stand victorious.

Psalms 110:1-7

Psalms 110 – Messiah, Priest, Conquering King

*This psalm carries the title **A Psalm of David**. Strangely, some scholars and commentators deny David's authorship. Yet as Derek Kinder noted: "Our Lord gave full weight to David's authorship and David's words, stressing the former twice by the expression 'David himself', and the latter by the comment that he was speaking 'in the Holy Spirit' (Mar 12:36 f.)."*

This remarkable psalm is one of the Old Testament portions most quoted in the New Testament. James Montgomery

Boice counted 27 direct quotations or indirect allusions to Psalms 110 in the New Testament.

A. The character of the Messiah.

1. (1-2) Appointed and honored by Yahweh.

The LORD said to my Lord,

"Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.

Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

a. **The LORD said to my Lord:** David prophetically revealed the words of Yahweh (**the LORD**) to the Messiah, David's **Lord**. This is clear not only from the context, but especially by how this verse is quoted in the New Testament.

i. The first verse of this psalm is one of the Old Testament verses most quoted in the New Testament.

- Jesus quoted it in Mat 22:43-45 (also Mar 12:36-37), showing how David called the Messiah "Lord" – recognizing that the Messiah was greater than David himself.

- Peter quoted it on Pentecost, explaining how David prophesied the deity and ascension of Jesus (Act 2:34-35).

- Paul referred to it in 1Co 15:25, explaining the rule and dominion of Jesus the Messiah.

- The author of Hebrews quotes it in Heb 1:13, referring to the superiority of Jesus the Messiah over any angel.

- The author of Hebrews referred to it in Heb 10:13, explaining the rule and dominion of Jesus the Messiah.

ii. "How condescending on Jehovah's part to permit a mortal ear to hear, and a human pen to record his secret converse with his co-equal Son! How greatly should we prize the revelation of his private and solemn discourse with the Son, herein made public for the refreshing of his people!" (Spurgeon)

b. **The LORD said to my Lord:** The fact that Yahweh – the **LORD**, the covenant God of Israel – spoke to one that David himself called **Lord** (*Adonai*) demonstrates that both Yahweh and Adonai mentioned in this verse are God.

i. Specifically speaking, we would say that Yahweh is the Triune God, with references to the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each being Yahweh. Normally, when Yahweh is mentioned without specific connection to the person of the Son or the Holy Spirit, we assume it refers to God the Father. Therefore, here God the Father is speaking to the Messiah, God the Son.

ii. "*Adonai* refers to an individual greater than the speaker. Here is a case of David's citing God's words in which God tells another personage, who is greater than David, to sit at God's right hand until God makes the person's enemies a footstool for the person's feet. This person can only be a divine Messiah, who is Jesus Christ." (Boice)

c. **Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool:** Yahweh (specifically, God the Father) spoke to the Messiah (specifically, God the Son), telling Him to take His enthroned place (Eph 1:20, Heb 8:1) until the Father provided the victory for the Son.

i. **Sit at My right hand:** "His work is done, and he may sit; it is well done, and he may sit at his right hand; it will have grand results, and he may therefore

quietly wait to see the complete victory which is certain to follow.” (Spurgeon)

ii. **Your footstool**: “Thy slaves and vassals to be put to the meanest and basest services, as this phrase implies, 1Ki 5:3, Psa 18:39; Psa 91:13; being taken from the manner of Eastern princes, who used to tread upon the necks of their conquered enemies, as we read, Jos 10:24.” (Poole)

d. **The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion**: The Messiah’s authority would not be limited to Israel. It would extend to the entire world, dominating all the kings and nations of the earth, giving Him **rule** over all **enemies**.

i. Adam Clarke is among those who think **the rod of Your strength** represents the Gospel: “*The Gospel – the doctrine of Christ crucified; which is the powerful sceptre of the Lord that bought us; is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; and is the power of God to salvation to all them that believe.*”

2. (3) *Recognized and honored by His people.*

Your people shall be volunteers

In the day of Your power;

In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,

You have the dew of Your youth.

a. **Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power**: When the people of God see and experience the victory of their Messiah, they will gladly give themselves to His work. They are willing in **the day** of His **power**. Since the Hebrew word translated **power** is the word for a *host* or *army*, the idea is that the Messiah’s people are gathered together as a willing army.

i. **Be volunteers:** "Heb. *willingnesses*, i.e. most willing, as such plural words are frequently used." (Poole)

ii. "There are no mercenaries in this battle, no slaves pressed into the ranks of Jesus' soldiers. This army is composed entirely of volunteers." (Boice)

iii. "Whensoever the Holy Spirit is supreme in a church there will be a free-will offering of young hearts and lives.... There are no pressed men in our Master's army – all are volunteers. Offer your will to God; say you are willing to be made willing." (Meyer)

b. **You have the dew of Your youth:** The people of God praise the victorious Messiah, and are noted for their beautiful **holiness**, their radiant being (**the womb of the morning**), and their ageless strength (**dew of Your youth**).

i. "But the reference of the expression is to the army, not to its leader. 'Youth' here is a collective noun, equivalent to 'young *men*.' The host of his soldier-subjects is described as a band of young warriors, whom he leads, in their fresh strength and countless numbers and gleaming beauty like the dew of the morning." (Maclaren, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (4) *Established as an eternal priest.*

**The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
"You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek."**

a. **The LORD has sworn and will not relent:** This puts the statement which follows in the most solemn and strong context possible. Yahweh (specifically, God the Father) made an oath that would never be annulled.

i. "God, as it were, pledges His own name, with its fulness of unchanging power, to the fulfilment of the word; and this irrevocable and omnipotent decree is made still more impressive by the added assurance."
(Maclaren)

b. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek: This is the oath of Yahweh (specifically, God the Father) regarding the Messiah, God the Son. He vowed that the Messiah had an eternal priesthood, and that it was after the pattern (**order**) of **Melchizedek**, who is mentioned in a single account in the Old Testament (Genesis 14).

i. The Genesis 14 account is brief, but densely packed with information about **Melchizedek**.

- After Abraham defeated the confederation of kings who took his nephew Lot captive, Abraham met with a mysterious priest named Melchizedek, whose name means *king of righteousness* and who was also king over the city of Salem (an ancient name for the city of *Jerusalem*), which made him the *king of peace*.

- Melchizedek was not merely a worshipper of the true God. He had the honored title *priest of the Most High God*. The greatness of God magnified the greatness of Melchizedek's priesthood.

- Melchizedek blessed Abraham, demonstrating his greatness over the patriarch.

- Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe, which is a tenth part of all (all the spoils of battle, as mentioned in Gen 14:20).

- There is no mention of any father or mother of Melchizedek, and he appears without any genealogy.

c. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek: With this oath, God revealed that there is

another order of priesthood, *apart* from the priestly order of Aaron. The Israelite priests were all descended from Aaron and served in the tabernacle (later the temple), offering sacrifices and conducting ceremonies according to God's law. Here we see that God established another priestly **order**, after the pattern of **Melchizedek**.

d. **You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek**: This oath was so important that the author of Hebrews refers to it five times (Heb 5:6; Heb 5:10; Heb 6:20; Heb 7:17; Heb 7:21).

- Heb 5:5-6; Heb 5:10 emphasize that this was *Yahweh's declaration*, not something that the Messiah claimed for Himself.

- In Heb 6:20, the emphasis is on the idea that Jesus the Messiah serves now and forever as a living, active High Priest for His people.

- Heb 7:17 emphasizes that the priesthood of Jesus the Messiah according to the **order of Melchizedek** is better than the priestly order of Aaron, because it is eternal and will never end.

- Heb 7:21 emphasizes that the priesthood of Jesus the Messiah according to the **order of Melchizedek** is better than the priestly order of Aaron because it was founded on a direct **oath** of Yahweh, unlike the priestly order of Aaron.

i. "His priesthood is not, like that of Aaron, figurative, successive, and transient, but real and effectual, fixed and incommunicable, eternal and unchangeable." (Horne)

ii. "The Church is collected and conserved not only by Christ's kingly power, but also by his priestly mediation." (Trapp)

B. The conquest of the Messiah.

1. (5) The Messiah contends with the kings of the nations.

**The Lord *is* at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.**

a. **The Lord is at Your right hand:** The favor and strength of the Messiah (**Your right hand**) is aligned with, and an instrument of, the strength of God (**the Lord**).

i. "The second part of the psalm carries the King into the battlefield. He comes forth from the throne, where He sat at Jehovah's right hand, and now Jehovah stands at His right hand." (Maclaren)

ii. "Now the Lord (i.e. Yahweh) and his King act as one, and the army of volunteers which was seen in verse 3 is no longer in the picture. The battle is the Lord's, yet he and his King are so united." (Kidner)

b. **He shall execute kings:** With the authority mentioned in verse 2, the strength of the Messiah extends out of Zion and brings the righteous judgment of God against even the greatest **kings**.

2. (6-7) The Messiah judges all nations.

**He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many countries.
He shall drink of the brook by the wayside;
Therefore He shall lift up the head.**

a. **He shall judge among the nations:** In His conquest, the Messiah will exercise His authority over all **nations**, bringing His judgment.

b. **He shall fill the places with dead bodies:** This seems to anticipate the slaughter at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16; Rev 19:11-21).

i. "The choice for every man is being crushed beneath His foot, or being exalted to sit with Him on His throne. 'He that overcometh, to him will I give to sit down with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne.' It is better to sit on His throne than to be His footstool." (Maclaren)

c. **Therefore He shall lift up the head:** While the rebellious nations of the world receive their judgment, the Messiah Himself is refreshed (**drink of the brook**) and exalted (**lift up the head**).

i. **He shall drink:** Curiously, many commentators take this as a reference to the Messiah's *humiliation*. It is better to see it as His refreshment on the day of battle. "Psa 110:7 is usually taken as depicting the King as pausing in His victorious pursuit of the flying foe to drink, like Gideon's men, from the brook, and then with renewed vigour pressing on." (Maclaren)

ii. **He shall lift up the head:** "...i.e. shall be delivered from all his sorrows and sufferings, and exalted to great glory, and joy, and felicity, as this phrase usually signifies, as Psa 3:3; Psa 27:6, Jer 52:31, and oft elsewhere; as, on the contrary, to *hang down the head*, is a signification of great grief and shame, as Lam 2:10." (Poole)

iii. "His own head shall be lifted high in victory, and his people, in him, shall be upraised also." (Spurgeon)

Great Are the Lord's Works

Psa 111:1 Praise the LORD! With all my heart I will thank the LORD in the assembly of his people.

Psa 111:2 How wonderful are the things the LORD does! All who are delighted with them want to understand them.

Psa 111:3 All he does is full of honor and majesty; his righteousness is eternal.

Psa 111:4 The LORD does not let us forget his wonderful actions; he is kind and merciful.

Psa 111:5 He provides food for those who honor him; he never forgets his covenant.

Psa 111:6 He has shown his power to his people by giving them the lands of foreigners.

Psa 111:7 In all he does he is faithful and just; all his commands are dependable.

Psa 111:8 They last for all time; they were given in truth and righteousness.

Psa 111:9 He set his people free and made an eternal covenant with them. Holy and mighty is he!

Psa 111:10 The way to become wise is to honor the LORD; he gives sound judgment to all who obey his commands. He is to be praised forever.

Psalms 111:1-10

Psalms 111 – The Greatness of God’s Works

This is another of the acrostic psalms, arranged according to the Hebrew alphabet. Except for the opening line of “Praise the Lord” (Hallelujah), each of the 22 lines of Psalms 111 begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

“The great art used in the composure of this and some other psalms (after the order of the Hebrew alphabet) serveth both to set forth their excellence and for the help of memory.” (John Trapp)

Many commentators note the connection between Psalms 111, 112. James Montgomery Boice observed, “The two psalms are an obviously matched pair. The first is an acrostic poem about God; the second is an acrostic poem about the godly man.”

A. Thinking about the great works of God.

1. (1) *The declaration and the decision to give God praise.*

Praise the LORD!

**I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright and *in* the
congregation.**

a. **Praise the LORD:** Psalms 111 begins with the simple declaration, *Hallelujah!* It was as if the psalmist thought, *Before I describe how I will praise Him, let me simply declare His praise.* The declaration also has the idea of encouraging others to do the same – I will praise the LORD, and you should also.

b. **I will praise the LORD with my whole heart:** The proclamation came after the declaration. There would be nothing held back in his praise; it would be given to God with his **whole heart**.

i. “If we want other people to praise God, we must praise God first. If we want them to love God, we must love him too. If we want others to serve God, we must serve him. We must set an example.”
(Boice)

ii. **My whole heart:** “God cannot be acceptably praised with a divided heart, neither should we attempt so to dishonour him; for our whole heart is little enough for his glory, and there can be no reason why it should not all be lifted up in his praise.”
(Spurgeon)

c. **In the assembly of the upright:** The praise would be wholehearted, but it would also be *public*. Praising God with others showed that the psalmist gloried in the praises of God; praising God with others was also a help and encouragement to praise Him.

i. The word for **assembly** and the word for **congregation** indicate different size groups. **Assembly** refers to a smaller, private group – something like our modern small group. **Congregation** refers to the larger gatherings of God's people.

ii. "*Company* [**assembly**] is that intimate word *sod*, which has the connotation of a circle of friends or advisers." (Kidner)

2. (2-3) *The study of God's great works.*

**The works of the LORD are great,
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.
His work *is* honorable and glorious,
And His righteousness endures forever.**

a. **The works of the LORD are great:** God should be praised for who He is, but what He has done is also worthy of praise. Here the emphasis is on His work in creation, and these **works** are **great** in their number and in their significance.

i. Kidner comments on the specific Hebrew word translated **works** in verse 2: "In the Psalms, the Lord's *works* (*maasim*) are sometimes his deeds, as in verse 6, but more often the things he has made (e.g., the heavens, 8:3; 19:1; 102:25; and the populous earth, 104:24)."

ii. "No small things are done by so great a hand." (Trapp)

iii. "In design, in size, in number, in excellence, all the works of the Lord are great. Even the little things of God are great." (Spurgeon)

b. **Studied by all who have pleasure in them:** The greatness of God's work invites close study by the scientist, the historian, and the theologian. Their findings

will lead them to do their work with all their strength and take **pleasure** in how God's wisdom and power are revealed through His **honorable and glorious** works.

i. **Studied:** "The more one gazes, the more one sees." (Maclaren)

ii. "There is a science laboratory in Cambridge, England, called the Cavendish Laboratory, named after the eighteenth-century English chemist and physicist Sir Henry Cavendish (1731-1810). It is distinguished by having the words of Psa 111:2 inscribed over the entrance to its building as a charter for every believing scientist: *Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.*" (Boice)

iii. "Kepler, when he first turned his telescope to clustered worlds, exclaimed, 'I am thinking over again the first thoughts of God.' Would that the ecstasy of the ardent student of nature might fill our hearts as we direct our thought to the great works of our Saviour-God." (Meyer)

iv. "Happy are they who, with humility and diligence, with faith and devotion, give themselves to the contemplation of these works, and take 'pleasure' and delight therein. To them shall the gate of true science open; they shall understand the mysteries of creation, providence, and redemption; and they who thus 'seek,' shall find the treasures of eternal wisdom." (Horne)

v. "But while this verse is well taken as God's charter for the scientist and artist, verse 10 must be its partner, lest 'professing to be wise' we become fools, like the men of Rom 1:18-23." (Kidner)

vi. This **pleasure** can be ours forever. "Probably this will be our employment in eternity; ever passing into deeper and fuller appreciation of the works of God, and breaking into more rapturous songs." (Meyer)

c. **His work is honorable and glorious:** Not only are God's works in creation great, but so is His **work** of guiding and arranging all things, His **work** of *providence*.

i. Kidner notes that a different Hebrew word is translated **work** in verse 3: "Here God's *work* (*poal*) is more likely to mean his providential acts, as in, e.g., Deu 32:4 [*His work is perfect*]."

B. Describing the great works of God.

1. (4-6) *Remembering God's great works.*

**He has made His wonderful works to be remembered;
The LORD is gracious and full of compassion.**

He has given food to those who fear Him;

He will ever be mindful of His covenant.

**He has declared to His people the power of His works,
In giving them the heritage of the nations.**

a. **He has made His wonderful works to be remembered:** God designed His saving acts to **be remembered** among His people. It is a dishonor to him and a failure of man that the miracles of His redemption are forgotten, or worse yet *denied*.

i. Kidner points out that still a third Hebrew word is translated **wonderful works**: "The expression *wonderful works* opens up another line of thought. It is a single word, 'wonders', and refers most often to the great saving acts of God."

ii. **To be remembered:** "The word *zeker*...is a noun in Hebrew. It connotes the act of 'proclamation.' Israel not only remembered but proclaimed what God had done." (VanGemeren)

b. **The LORD is gracious and full of compassion:** First in the mind of the psalmist was God's great work of grace and love. He is **full** of these qualities in His being, and expresses them in his great works.

i. **"Is gracious and full of compassion** towards his people, as appears from his works and carriage towards us, in sparing, and pardoning, and restoring, and preserving us when we have deserved to be utterly destroyed." (Poole)

c. **He has given food to those who fear Him:** Perhaps the psalmist had in mind God's provision for Israel through the wilderness, or the more general principle David wrote of in Psa 37:25, that he had never seen the descendants of the righteous begging bread.

i. **Food:** "The word signifies what is taken in *hunting* – wild beasts, venison, or *fowls* of any kind; particularly such as were proper for food. It also signifies *spoil* taken from enemies." (Clarke)

d. **He will ever be mindful of His covenant:** God will never forget the covenant He made with Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12) or the covenant He made with Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 24).

e. **He has declared to His people the power of His works:** God did not hide His greatness, but **declared** it to **His people** – *if they would pay attention!* This declaration of His great works brought Israel into the land of Canaan (**giving them the heritage of the nations**).

i. "...two standing proofs of Divine kindness are the miraculous provision of food in the desert and the possession of the promised land." (Maclaren)

2. (7-9) *The nature of God's great works.*

**The works of His hands *are* verity and justice;
All His precepts *are* sure.
They stand fast forever and ever,
And are done in truth and uprightness.
He has sent redemption to His people;
He has commanded His covenant forever:
Holy and awesome *is* His name.**

a. **The works of His hands are verity and justice:** What God does is true and fair, and what He commands is settled (**His precepts are sure**). This is seen in God's great works in creation and in history.

i. "Thus the inspired author brings out the coherence between the Lord's acts and words. They all reflect his divine nature as a Father-King in relationship to his children-subjects. The precepts with their encouragements, promises, threats, blessings, and curses are true!" (VanGemeran)

ii. **His precepts are sure:** "He is no fickle despot, commanding one thing one day and another [on a different day], but his commands remain absolutely unaltered, their necessity equally unquestionable, their excellence permanently proven, and their reward eternally secure." (Spurgeon)

b. **He has sent redemption to His people:** One of God's greatest works is rescuing His people from their oppression and sin, and doing it in the context of **His covenant**. The psalmist likely had the exodus in mind.

i. The King James Version translates the phrase, **holy and awesome is His name** as *holy and reverend is his name*. Adam Clarke comments on the word *reverend* from the King James Version: "The word *reverend* comes to us from the Latins, *reverendus*, and is compounded of *re*, intensive, and *vereor*, to be feared; and *most* or *right* reverend, *reverendissimus*,

signifies *to be greatly feared*. These terms are now only titles of ecclesiastical respect, especially in the *Protestant* ministry; but there was a time in which these were no empty titles. Such was the power of the clergy, that, when they walked not in the fear of the Lord, they caused the

people to fear, and they themselves were to be feared; but, when the secular power was added to the spiritual, they were then truly reverendi and reverendissimi, to be feared and greatly to be feared."

3. (10) *What should be learned from God's great works.*

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do *His*
*commandments.***

His praise endures forever.

a. **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:** Recognizing the greatness of God's works, one should appropriately **fear** Him. God should be regarded with respect, reverence, and awe. This proper attitude of the creature toward the Creator is **the beginning of wisdom**. Wisdom cannot advance further until this starting point is established.

i. The idea that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom is also found in Job 28:28; Pro 1:7; Pro 9:10; and Ecc 12:13.

ii. "It is probably a safe bet to say that most people today are not much interested in wisdom. They are interested in making money and in having a good time. Some are interested in knowing something, in getting an education. Almost everyone wants to be well liked. But wisdom? The pursuit of wisdom is not a popular ideal." (Boice)

iii. "It is not only the beginning of wisdom, but the middle and the end. It is indeed the Alpha and Omega, the essence, the body and the soul, the sum and substance. He that hath the fear of God is truly wise." (de Superville, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **A good understanding have all those who do His commandments:** Taking into account the greatness of God's works, one should obey God – that is, **do His commandments**. A life of obedience reveals that one has a **good understanding** of the greatness of God's works.

i. "Obedience to God proves that our judgment is sound." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The Psalm closes with words which prepare for the next, as they declare that the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom, and that such as act according to that fear have good understanding." (Morgan)

c. **His praise endures forever:** Taking into account the greatness of God's works, one should **praise** Him and never stop praising Him. The angels surrounding God's throne see His greatness and the greatness of His works, and they never stop praising Him (Rev 4:8).

The Righteous Will Never Be Moved

Psa 112:1 Praise the LORD! Happy is the person who honors the LORD, who takes pleasure in obeying his commands.

Psa 112:2 The good man's children will be powerful in the land; his descendants will be blessed.

Psa 112:3 His family will be wealthy and rich, and he will be prosperous forever.

Psa 112:4 Light shines in the darkness for good people, for those who are merciful, kind, and just.

Psa 112:5 Happy is the person who is generous with his loans, who runs his business honestly.

Psa 112:6 A good person will never fail; he will always be remembered.

Psa 112:7 He is not afraid of receiving bad news; his faith is strong, and he trusts in the LORD.

Psa 112:8 He is not worried or afraid; he is certain to see his enemies defeated.

Psa 112:9 He gives generously to the needy, and his kindness never fails; he will be powerful and respected.

Psa 112:10 The wicked see this and are angry; they glare in hate and disappear; their hopes are gone forever.

Psalms 112:1-10

Psalms 112 – The Blessings Upon Those Who Fear the LORD

Like Psalms 111 before it, Psalms 112 is an acrostic psalm. James Montgomery Boice commented on the similarities between Psalms 111, 112 : "They are the same length, fall into identical stanzas, and even have identical or similar phrases occurring at the same places in each. Both are precise acrostics; that is, they have twenty-two lines each of which begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet."

Charles Spurgeon wrote this regarding the connection between Psalms 111, 112 : "It bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun; for, while the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above."

A. The blessed man and his family.

1. (1) The blessed life of the man who fears the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,

Who delights greatly in His commandments.

a. **Praise the LORD:** Like several others in this section of the psalms, Psalms 112 begins with *Hallelujah!* This was both the personal praise of the psalmist and an exhortation to others to praise Him.

i. "The Psalm cannot be viewed as the extolling of man, for it commences with 'Praise ye the Lord;' and it is intended to give to God all the honour of his grace which is manifested in the sons of God." (Spurgeon)

b. **Blessed is the man who fears the LORD:** Psalms 111, 112 may have been composed together; they are certainly set together in the collection on purpose. Psalms 111 ended with the idea that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; now the psalmist explains the blessedness of the one who does fear the LORD.

i. "The fear the Bible is talking about is best described as a profound reverence; that is, we are to revere God, or stand in awe of him." (Boice)

c. **Who delights greatly in His commandments:** This blessed one does not fear God in a sense of misery and reluctant obligation. This psalm speaks of one who **delights greatly** in God's commandments.

i. "There is a deliberate echo of the previous psalm here. Psa 111:2 spoke of delight in God's *works*. In Psa 112:1 we are told that God's people also delight in God's *words* (commands)." (Boice)

ii. "To this man God's word is as fascinating as are his works to the naturalist; and the term used for it, *his commandments*, implies that his interest is practical. What grips him is God's will and call." (Kidner)

iii. "The man who duly 'feareth God,' is delivered from every other fear; the man who 'delighteth in God's commandments,' is freed from every inordinate desire of earthly things." (Horne)

iv. "It is not enough to *fear God*, we must also *love him*: *fear* will deter us from *evil*; *love* will lead us to *obedience*." (Clarke)

v. Think of the great measure of blessedness upon Jesus. No one revered God the Father as Jesus did; no one delighted in the Father's commandments as much as Jesus did.

2. (2-3) *The household of the blessed man.*

**His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches *will be* in his house,
And his righteousness endures forever.**

a. **His descendants will be mighty on earth:** The one who *fears the LORD* and *delights greatly in His commandments* (verse 1) has God's blessing on his family. The psalmist pronounced blessing on the **descendants** of this man, the one who is **upright**.

i. "'Mighty' here means being of recognized stature or standing rather than being physically strong." (Boice)

ii. "If any one should desire to leave behind him a flourishing posterity, let him not think to accomplish it by accumulating heaps of gold and silver, and leaving them behind him; but by rightly recognising God and serving Him; and commending his children to the guardianship and protection of God." (Mollerus, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Wealth and riches will be in his house:** The psalmist also pronounced a blessing on the economic life of the one who fears the LORD. Their life of obedience

and honor to God means God's blessing will also come to their financial dealings.

i. "Such promises are expected to be fulfilled in general; it is not required by any proper rules of interpreting language that this should be universally and always true." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "The prosperity promised in the present verses may be largely material, but a closer look reveals the moral and spiritual terms which make it an instrument of good." (Kidner)

iii. "Understood literally this is rather a promise of the old covenant than of the new, for many of the best of the people of God are very poor; yet it has been found true that uprightness is the road to success, and, all other things being equal, the honest man is the rising man." (Spurgeon)

iv. "It sometimes pleaseth God to bestow on his servants, as he did on Israel of old, the good things of this world. And a rich man is therefore happier than a poor man, because 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Horne)

c. **His righteousness endures forever:** This blessed man's good works and right standing with God are lasting. They will not fade in this world or the world to come.

i. "He is not the worse for his wealth, nor drawn aside by the deceitfulness of riches." (Trapp)

ii. Adam Clarke had an interesting idea: **righteousness** here and in verse 9 refer to the generous giving of the man who fears the LORD. Clarke stated that the both the Hebrew and Greek words normally translated **righteousness** "...are often used to signify, not only *justice* and

righteousness, but also beneficence and almsgiving; and this is most probably the meaning here."

B. The contrast between the upright and the wicked.

1. (4-8) The upright are established.

**Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness;
He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.
A good man deals graciously and lends;
He will guide his affairs with discretion.
Surely he will never be shaken;
The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.
He will not be afraid of evil tidings;
His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
His heart *is* established;
He will not be afraid,
Until he sees *his desire* upon his enemies.**

a. **Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness:** The psalmist recognized the **darkness** that often fills the world, but the **upright** one who fears the LORD will be blessed with **light** in the midst of the darkness.

i. "God himself is the light which arises in darkness for those who are sincere in their dealings with him."
(Delitzsch, cited in Boice)

ii. "The relationship of God to the godly person is like the relationship of the sun to the moon. The sun shines by its own glorious light. The moon does not, but still it shines, and the way it shines is by reflecting the light coming to it from the sun." (Boice)

iii. "While we are on earth, we are subject to a threefold 'darkness;' the darkness of error, the darkness of sorrow, and the darkness of death."
(Horne)

iv. "The psalm gives a realistic portrayal of wisdom as it brings out, not only the blessings of honor, children, and riches, but also the reality of adversities." (VanGemeren)

b. **He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous:** The light received from God shines through the righteous one, and he displays to others the grace, **compassion**, righteousness, and generosity God has granted to him.

i. Verse 3 referred to the *wealth and riches* that often come to those who fear the Lord. Kidner observed, "The psalm deals realistically with the temptations that go with the possession of money." These include abuse to power, refusing to lend, fear, rivalry, and lack of generosity.

ii. **And lends:** "Finding himself in circumstances which enable him to spare a little of his wealth he lends judiciously where a loan will be of permanent service. Providence has made him able to lend, and grace makes him willing to lend. He is not a borrower, for God has lifted him above that necessity; neither is he a hoarder, for his new nature saves him from that temptation; but he wisely uses the talents committed to him." (Spurgeon)

c. **He will guide his affairs with discretion:** The one who fears the LORD is blessed with wisdom (Psa 111:10) that flows from his godly character.

i. "**With discretion**, Heb. *with judgment*; so as is fit and meet, and as God requires, not getting his estate unjustly, nor casting it away prodigally or wickedly, nor yet withholding it uncharitably from such as need it." (Poole)

d. **He will never be shaken:** Because of His character and wisdom, the one who fears the LORD will be firmly established. His **remembrance** will last, with nothing to fear from **evil tidings**. As he trusts in the LORD, **his heart is established** and in the end, he will see victory over his enemies.

i. "He who builds his transient life on and into the Rock of Ages wins rocklike steadfastness.... Lives rooted in God are never uprooted." (Maclaren)

ii. **Everlasting remembrance:** "The righteous are worth remembering, their actions are of the kind which record themselves, and God himself takes charge of their memorials." (Spurgeon)

e. **He will not be afraid of evil tidings:** Evil tidings are all around us, and come to us every day. Evil tidings may come to us from our family, from our health, from business, from the unfaithful, from the culture around us, or from politics. Yet the one who fears the LORD **will not be afraid**.

i. "There cannot be evil tidings to the soul which has fixed its trust in the Lord.... If tidings were to come to you today of disease, loss, bereavement, death, they could not be evil if your heart dares to maintain a fixed trust in God; for such trust robs death of its sting, and the grave of its victory. I cannot understand, but I can trust Him." (Meyer)

ii. **His heart is established:** "His heart is propped up; he is *buttressed up* by the strength of his Maker." (Clarke)

iii. "He is neither fickle nor cowardly; when he is undecided as to his course he is still fixed in heart: he may change his plan, but not the purpose of his soul." (Spurgeon)

2. (9-10) *The grief of the wicked.*

**He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted with honor.
The wicked will see *it* and be grieved;
He will gnash his teeth and melt away;
The desire of the wicked shall perish.**

a. **He has dispersed:** This psalm has much to say about the *generosity* of the one who fears the LORD. Since he is blessed in regard to material things (verse 3), it is important that he is generous with his blessings. He is also *wise*; **dispersed** implies a wise and thoughtful distribution as part of the *discretion* that guides his affairs (verse 5).

i. Paul quoted verse 9 in 2Co 9:9 to encourage Christians to be generous: *As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."*

ii. This generosity is not "...given indiscriminately and at random, but 'dispersed,' like precious seed, with prudence and discretion, according to the nature of the soil, and in proper season, so as to produce the most plentiful harvest." (Horne)

b. **His righteousness endures forever:** The profile of this man (or woman) who fears the LORD is remarkable. It is a reflection of the character of God Himself, even as the moon reflects the sun's light. It is partially fulfilled in the godly man or woman, and perfectly fulfilled in the man Jesus Christ.

- He is a God-fearing man (*who fears the LORD*).
- He is a lover of God's word (*delights greatly in His commandments*).

- He is a prosperous man (*wealth and riches*).
- He is a man who makes a home for his family (*his descendants...his house*).
- He is a loving and kind man (*gracious, and full of compassion*).
- He is a helping man (*deals graciously and lends*).
- He is a wise man (*will guide his affairs with discretion*).
- He is a strong man (*not afraid of evil tidings*).
- He is a generous man (*he has dispersed abroad*).
- He is a man who does not abuse power (*his horn will be exalted with honor*).
- He is a hated man (*the wicked will see it and be grieved*).

i. **Endures forever:** "Wise living is characterized by lasting success, unlike many human endeavors that fail or are short-lived." (VanGemeren)

ii. "When all the flashes of sensual pleasure are quite extinct, when all the flowers of secular glory are withered away; when all earthly treasures are buried in darkness; when this world, and all the fashion of it, are utterly vanished and gone, the bountiful man's state will be still firm and flourishing, and *'his righteousness shall endure for ever.'*" (Barrow, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **His horn will be exalted with honor:** "His power and authority *shall be exalted with honour*. He shall rise to influence only through his own worth, and not by extortion or flattery." (Clarke)

iv. "Let it now be read again in close connection with the preceding one [Psalms 111], and it will be seen that the supreme fact about this man is that he has

indeed become like the God Whom he fears and obeys. The very things celebrated in the praise of Jehovah are those which constitute the excellencies of this man who fears Him.” (Morgan)

c. **The wicked will see it and be grieved:** In contrast to the enduring blessing upon the upright man, the wicked man will **melt away**. His misery will be all the worse as his **desire** is frustrated and he sees the blessings that come to those who fear the LORD.

i. The wicked may not gnash their teeth in this life, but they certainly will in the age to come (Luk 13:28).

ii. “The covetous wretch who sat a brood upon his bags, and befooled the bountiful man, shall himself come to beggary, which he so much feared, and be ready to eat his own nails through envy at the other’s prosperity.” (Trapp)

Who Is like the Lord Our God?

Psa 113:1 Praise the LORD! You servants of the LORD, praise his name!

Psa 113:2 May his name be praised, now and forever.

Psa 113:3 From the east to the west praise the name of the LORD!

Psa 113:4 The LORD rules over all nations; his glory is above the heavens.

Psa 113:5 There is no one like the LORD our God. He lives in the heights above,

Psa 113:6 but he bends down to see the heavens and the earth.

Psa 113:7 He raises the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from their misery

Psa 113:8 and makes them companions of princes, the princes of his people.

Psa 113:9 He honors the childless wife in her home; he makes her happy by giving her children. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 113:1-9

Psalms 113 – Praise to the LORD Who Lifts the Lowly

The book of Psalms contains three collections titled Hallel, with Psalms 113-118 known as the Egyptian Hallel, mainly because of their connection with Passover celebrations, commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The psalms of the Egyptian Hallel were sung as part of the Passover ceremony, with 113-114 sung before the meal and 115-118 after the meal.

"This group is necessarily of special interest to us because in all probability, these psalms were sung by our Lord and His disciples on that dark night in which He was betrayed." (G. Campbell Morgan)

"To these reference is made by the evangelists, Mat 26:30, and Mar 14:26, there called the hymn which Jesus and his disciples sung at the passover." (Adam Clarke)

A. Calling God's servants to continually praise Him.

1. (1) A call to praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

a. **Praise the LORD:** This is the third consecutive psalm to begin with the exclamation, *Hallelujah!* As in Psalms 111, 112, it is both a personal statement of praise and an encouragement for others to do the same.

b. **Praise, O servants of the LORD:** God's **servants** have special reason to praise Him. They have the honor

of sharing in His great work, and they are promised eternal reward for doing so. Everyone has reason for praise; **servants of the LORD** have many more reasons.

c. **Praise the name of the LORD:** This means honoring and exalting Yahweh Himself and His character, which are represented by His **name**.

i. "There is a point in specifying the Lord's *servants* and his *name*, since worship to be acceptable must be more than flattery and more than guess-work. It is the loving homage of the committed to the Revealed." (Kidner)

ii. "In the case of God 'the name of the Lord' is all important, for it has to do with the revelation of who God is. In other words, it is not just any God we are to worship. We are to praise the one true 'Lord,' who has revealed himself in creation, on Sinai, and more recently in the person of his only Son, Jesus of Nazareth." (Boice)

2. (2-3) *The lasting nature of God's praise.*

Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its going down
The LORD's name *is* to be praised.

a. **From this time forth and forevermore:** In verse 1 we were encouraged to praise the name of Yahweh. In this next verse we are encouraged to do it **forevermore**. The unchanging God never becomes unworthy of our praise. For the child of God with open eyes, time only reveals more reasons to praise Him.

i. **Blessed be the name of the LORD:** "Praise him with utmost intention and extension of spirit and of

speech. God is therefore called, by an appellative proper, The Blessed One.” (Trapp)

b. **From the rising of the sun to its going down:** Using the Hebrew pattern of repetition, the psalmist emphasized the idea that God’s is worthy of *continual* praise.

B. Reasons to praise God continually.

1. (4-6) *The greatness of God’s glory.*

**The LORD is high above all nations,
His glory above the heavens.
Who *is* like the LORD our God,
Who dwells on high,
Who humbles Himself to behold
*The things that are in the heavens and in the earth?***

a. **His glory above the heavens:** Yahweh is not only greater than all the heathen **nations**, but His glory extends **above the heavens**. The covenant God of little Israel is greater than everything in creation.

i. “Though the Gentiles knew him not, yet was Jehovah their ruler: their false gods were no gods, and their kings were puppets in his hands.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Who is like the LORD our God:** His exaltation above everything on earth or heaven shows that Yahweh is incomparable. Nothing exists that is greater than He **who dwells on high**.

c. **Who humbles Himself to behold:** When we understand the greatness of God, His interest and care for creation (especially mankind) is remarkable. Here the psalmist shared the idea of David in Psa 8:4 : *What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?* Psa 144:3 has a similar sense of amazement.

- i. "God's loftiness can never be adequately measured, unless His condescension is taken into account; and His condescension never sufficiently wondered at, unless His loftiness is felt." (Maclaren)
- ii. "What amazes the psalmist is that God is exalted so high that he has to stoop low to see not only the earth but also the heavens, and yet at the same time he cares for the lowly." (Boice)
- iii. "Heathen philosophers could not believe that the great God was observant of the small events of human history; they pictured him as abiding in serene indifference to all the wants and woes of his creatures." (Spurgeon)
- iv. "If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbled himself." (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (7-9) God's care for the lowly.

**He raises the poor out of the dust,
And lifts the needy out of the ash heap,
That He may seat *him* with princes—
With the princes of His people.
He grants the barren woman a home,
Like a joyful mother of children.
Praise the LORD!**

- a. **He raises the poor out of the dust:** When God in heaven beholds the things on earth (verse 6), He sees the **poor** down in the **dust** and the **needy** in the **ash heap** – and He **raises** them up.

i. "When no hand but his can help he interposes, and the work is done. It is worthwhile to be cast down to be so divinely raised from the dust." (Spurgeon)

ii. When Jesus sang these words on the night of His betrayal and arrest, it must have occurred to Him that in a sense *He* was the one who would be lifted from the **dust** of the grave to the highest place.

b. **That He may seat him with princes:** God lifts the poor and needy *from* the depths *up to* the heights. In light of the new covenant, we can make the connection with God's work in the life of the believer as described in Eph 2:5-6 : ... *even when we were dead in trespasses, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

i. While these words look forward to Eph 2:5-6, they also look back. "Consciously, however, these verses look back to the song of Hannah, which they quote almost exactly (cf. 7, 8a with 1Sa 2:8). Hence the sudden reference to the childless woman who becomes a mother (9), for this was Hannah's theme." (Kidner)

c. **He grants the barren woman a home:** The psalmist illustrated one way the work of lifting the poor and needy to a high and honored place might work. The picture is of a woman **barren** of children becoming **a joyful mother**.

i. "The afflicted man will receive recognition and the oppressed woman will receive honor in being a woman. In the ancient Near East, and especially in Israel, motherhood was a crowning achievement of any woman. A barren woman was a social outcast; she was a disappointment to her husband, to other women, and especially to herself." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Sarah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and others were all instances of the miraculous power of God in literally fulfilling the statement of the Psalmist." (Spurgeon)

iii. "This psalm ends by saying that the great exalted God of the Bible is not only concerned about needy people in general but also with the individual. He cares about you. He cares for you and me personally." (Boice)

iv. It is significant to remember that Jesus sang these words on the night He was betrayed and arrested, the night before His crucifixion. "As he approached the ultimate depths in this stooping, He sang the song which offers praise to God for this condescending grace." (Morgan)

d. **Praise the LORD:** The caring, loving God who comes from the highest heaven to help the humble of the earth is worthy of praise – Hallelujah!

i. "The music concludes upon its key-note. The Psalm is a circle, ending where it began, praising the Lord from its first syllable to its last. May our life-psalm partake of the same character, and never know a break or a conclusion. In an endless circle let us bless the Lord, whose mercies never cease." (Spurgeon)

Tremble at the Presence of the Lord

Psa 114:1 When the people of Israel left Egypt, when Jacob's descendants left that foreign land,

Psa 114:2 Judah became the Lord's holy people, Israel became his own possession.

Psa 114:3 The Red Sea looked and ran away; the Jordan River stopped flowing.

Psa 114:4 The mountains skipped like goats; the hills jumped around like lambs.

Psa 114:5 What happened, Sea, to make you run away?
And you, O Jordan, why did you stop flowing?

Psa 114:6 You mountains, why did you skip like goats? You
hills, why did you jump around like lambs?

Psa 114:7 Tremble, earth, at the Lord's coming, at the
presence of the God of Jacob,

Psa 114:8 who changes rocks into pools of water and solid
cliffs into flowing springs.

Psalms 114:1-8

Psalms 114 – The Mighty Presence of God Delivers His People from Egypt

Charles Spurgeon had high praise for Psalms 114, the second in the series of psalms known as the Egyptian Hallel and sung as part of Israel's Passover ceremony: "This sublime SONG OF THE EXODUS is one and indivisible. True poetry has here reached its climax: no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of this psalm."

A. Introduction: God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

1. (1) Delivered from a foreign land.

**When Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange
language,**

a. **When Israel went out of Egypt:** Israel's deliverance from **Egypt** was the central act of redemption under the Old Covenant. It was to be constantly remembered and celebrated, and this song joins in the celebration.

i. For those who are under the New Covenant in Jesus, the work of Jesus at the cross and empty tomb becomes the central act of redemption. We are likewise called to constantly remember and celebrate what God did to set us free by dying on the cross for us.

b. **The house of Jacob from a people of strange language:** The emphasis is on the idea that Israel did not *belong* in Egypt. Though they lived there for some 400 years, it was never their home. In a similar way, this world is a place of **a people of strange language** for all whom God redeems.

i. "The reference to the 'foreign tongue' evokes the association with oppression (cf. Isa 28:11; Jer 5:15) and is synonymous with 'the house of bondage' (cf. Exo 20:2)." (VanGemeren)

2 (2) *Delivered to be His dwelling place and His servants.*

**Judah became His sanctuary,
And Israel His dominion.**

a. **Judah became His sanctuary:** The leading tribe of Israel (**Judah**) represented the whole nation which became the dwelling place of God (**His sanctuary**). The godly in Israel always understood that God's dwelling in the tabernacle or temple was only symbolic of His presence in His people.

i. "There is a dramatic change of status between the first verse and the second. The group of aliens, their isolation increased by the *strange language* that

surrounded them, is now viewed in relation not to man but to God.” (Kidner)

ii. “Judah he mentions as the chief of all the tribes, not only in number and power, but also in dignity, in which the kingdom was to be seated, Gen 49:10, etc., as at this time it actually was, and from which the Messiah was to spring.” (Poole)

iii. “They are two names [**Judah** and **Israel**] for the one people that came out of Egypt at the exodus. This one people is declared to be both God’s sanctuary and God’s kingdom.” (Boice)

b. **And Israel His dominion:** Any place God dwells, He dominates. God’s desire to make Israel His **sanctuary** was so they could honor Him as Lord and Master, not merely as a helper or mascot.

B. The great works of God in delivering Israel from Egypt.

1. (3-6) God’s authority over the waters and the mountains.

The sea saw *it* and fled;

Jordan turned back.

The mountains skipped like rams,

The little hills like lambs.

What ails you, O sea, that you fled?

O Jordan, *that* you turned back?

O mountains, *that* you skipped like rams?

O little hills, like lambs?

a. **The sea saw it and fled:** As in other places in Hebrew poetry, the psalmist personified nature and described it as responding to God in fear or reverence. Here he mentioned the parting of waters at both the Red Sea and the **Jordan** River, at the beginning and end of Israel’s journey to the Promised Land.

i. "Nature recognised His presence and obeyed His will. The sea fled, Jordan was driven back, mountains and little hills were moved." (Morgan)

ii. "If the divine presence hath such an effect upon inanimate matter, how ought it to operate on rational and accountable beings?" (Horne)

b. **Jordan turned back:** The psalmist gives a beautiful and powerful picture. When these waters divided, they simply responded to the awesome presence of the Lord. The sense is, "What else could they do?"

i. "The poet does not sing of the suspension of natural laws, or of a singular phenomenon not readily to be explained; but to him the presence of God with his people is everything, and in his lofty song he tells how the river was driven back because the Lord was there." (Spurgeon)

ii. "It is noticeable that the Exodus is thought of in its completeness; not only escape from Egypt, but entrance to the land, for both Sea and Jordan are seen as passed." (Morgan)

iii. Spurgeon saw spiritual significance in this combination of the start of the Exodus and the end of it: "The division of the sea and the drying up of the river are placed together though forty years intervened, because they were the opening and closing scenes of one great event. We may thus unite by faith our new birth and our departure out of the world into the promised inheritance.... It is all one and the same deliverance, and the beginning ensures the end."

c. **The mountains skipped like rams:** This probably has reference to the strong earthquakes and similar phenomena that happened at Mount Sinai (Exo 19:16-

20) when God manifested His presence there. They shook and “**skipped**” like sheep.

i. “Men fear the mountains, but the mountains tremble before the Lord.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The idea of **skipped like rams** carries also the thought of *joy*. We might say creation was *happy* God brought this deliverance to His people. “Truly Yahweh appeared to Israel and established his kingdom in Israel. That is why nature as it were responded with a twofold response: fear and great joy.” (VanGemenen)

d. **What ails you, O sea:** The psalmist challenged both the **sea** and the **mountains**. *They* were powerless to stand against the mighty presence of God. It’s even more foolish to think that mankind (either individually or together) can stand against God’s mighty presence.

i. “Such speeches directed to [inanimate objects] are very frequent, both in Scripture and in other authors, and especially in poetical writings, such as this.” (Poole)

ii. “God has come nearer to us than ever he did to Sinai, or to Jordan, for he has assumed our nature, and yet the masses of mankind are neither driven back from their sins, nor moved in the paths of obedience.” (Spurgeon)

2. (7-8) *Calling the earth to honor the Lord.*

**Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
At the presence of the God of Jacob,
Who turned the rock *into* a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of waters.**

a. **Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord:** The psalmist called upon *all* the **earth** to honor *Adonai* in His mighty **presence**. The **God of Jacob** is more than a local deity; He is God of all the earth.

i. Verse 7 is the first time in this psalm that God is referred to by any name or title (**Lord** [*Adonai*] and **God of Jacob**). Up to this point, the psalmist has asked questions: Who is it? What did it? "The author must have been having fun as he wrote, knowing the answer and knowing we know the answer too, but holding it off. What could have caused the sea to part, the river to turn back, and the hills to tremble? he asks. For twelve lines he has allowed our interest to build for dramatic effect." (Boice)

ii. Morgan linked the idea of **tremble** to labor pains in birth. "When Jehovah, acting as Sovereign Lord, and in His might thus convulsed Nature, it was that a nation might be born." (Morgan)

b. **Who turned the rock into a pool of waters:** The psalmist remembered one more event which demonstrated God's power over creation during the Exodus years – when God brought forth water for His people from **the rock** and the hardened **flint**. This assured the people of God that His mighty presence works *for* them, not against them.

i. As Psalms 113 closed with God's compassion on the barren woman, this psalm closes with God's compassion on thirsty Israel. His great power and might are not merely for the dividing of waters and the shaking of mountains. His majestic might brings blessing to His people one by one.

ii. **The flint into a fountain of waters:** "This is a miracle which we all need to have wrought in our experience. Our heart is flint, our eyes are dry, our souls fail to respond with tears and regrets to the love of the Pierced One, and to the indictment that charges us with His death." (Meyer)

iii. Psalms 114 ends without giving any specific instruction to the people of God, but simply declares His great works. "He has no word of 'moral,' no application, counsel, warning, or encouragement to give. Whoso will can draw these. Enough for him to lift his soaring song, and to check it into silence in the midst of its full music." (Maclaren)

iv. We again remind ourselves that Jesus probably sang this psalm together with His disciples on the night He was betrayed and arrested (Mat 26:30 and Mar 14:26). He would grant the people of God a greater deliverance than Israel out of Egypt. In that work all nature would be shaken (Mat 27:45; Mat 27:51).

To Your Name Give Glory

Psa 115:1 To you alone, O LORD, to you alone, and not to us, must glory be given because of your constant love and faithfulness.

Psa 115:2 Why should the nations ask us, "Where is your God?"

Psa 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever he wishes.

Psa 115:4 Their gods are made of silver and gold, formed by human hands.

Psa 115:5 They have mouths, but cannot speak, and eyes, but cannot see.

Psa 115:6 They have ears, but cannot hear, and noses, but cannot smell.

Psa 115:7 They have hands, but cannot feel, and feet, but cannot walk; they cannot make a sound.

Psa 115:8 May all who made them and who trust in them become like the idols they have made.

Psa 115:9 Trust in the LORD, you people of Israel. He helps you and protects you.

Psa 115:10 Trust in the LORD, you priests of God. He helps you and protects you.

Psa 115:11 Trust in the LORD, all you that worship him. He helps you and protects you.

Psa 115:12 The LORD remembers us and will bless us; he will bless the people of Israel and all the priests of God.

Psa 115:13 He will bless everyone who honors him, the great and the small alike.

Psa 115:14 May the LORD give you children—you and your descendants!

Psa 115:15 May you be blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth!

Psa 115:16 Heaven belongs to the LORD alone, but he gave the earth to us humans.

Psa 115:17 The LORD is not praised by the dead, by any who go down to the land of silence.

Psa 115:18 But we, the living, will give thanks to him now and forever. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 115:1-18

Psalms 115 – The LORD Our Help and Shield

Psalms 115 is a continuation of the collection of the Egyptian Hallel psalms (Psalms 113-118) sung by the Jews during their Passover celebrations. It therefore makes up part of the hymns which would have been sung by Jesus and His disciples on the night He was betrayed and arrested, the night before His crucifixion (Mat 26:30 and Mar 14:26). It is especially meaningful to consider this psalm in the heart and on the lips of Jesus during those great moments.

Regarding the structure of this psalm, James Montgomery Boice observed: "The opinion of the majority of scholars is that the psalm is liturgical, intended to be sung by alternating groups of worshipers: the priests, the high priest, the people, and so on."

A. The LORD exalted above all idols.

1. (1-2) Praise and a subtle prayer.

**Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.
Why should the Gentiles say,
"So where *is* their God?"**

a. **Not unto us, but to Your name give glory:** The singer of this psalm understood that when God did wonderful things, the glory should be given to God – not to God's people (**not unto us**), even if they are in some sense active in the work. The **glory** should go unto God and His holy **name**.

i. "This is the godly man's motto, and his daily practice." (Trapp)

ii. "Not first for the welfare of the people does [the psalmist] care, but for the vindication of his God. This is a deep note, and all too rare in our music. We are ever in danger of putting the welfare of man before the glory of God." (Morgan)

iii. "The repetition of the words, 'Not unto us,' would seem to indicate a very serious desire to renounce any glory which they might at any time have proudly appropriated to themselves, and it also sets forth the vehemence of their wish that God would at any cost to them magnify his own name." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Adoniram Judson, full of ambition, seeking a great name, met with this text, and rebelled against it; but he says that all his bright visions for the future seemed to vanish as these words sounded in his soul, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.'" (Spurgeon)

v. These verses were likely in the mind and heart of Jesus on the night before His crucifixion. Singing these words must have moved Him in a way beyond our comprehension. "No soul – neither that of the composer of the song, nor that of anyone who employs it – ever entered so completely into all its deep spiritual significance, as did the soul of Jesus, as, before passing out to Olivet, to Gethsemane, to Calvary, He sang it with that little group of men." (Morgan)

b. Because of Your mercy, because of Your truth: The **mercy** of God alone means that He is worthy of praise and glory – not His people who receive His **mercy**. We may add to that His **truth**, because truth is *grounded* in Him and not in His people.

i. **Mercy** translates the great Hebrew word *hesed*, which may be understood as Yahweh's grace, His loyal love, His covenant love unto His people. When John later wrote *grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* (Joh 1:17), he wrote with the same idea of the psalmist and saw it perfectly fulfilled in Jesus.

ii. "Thy mercy gave thy promise, thy truth fulfilled it." (Clarke)

c. Why should the Gentiles say, "So where is their God?" This is a skillfully formed prayer. The request is made subtly but powerfully. The psalmist asked God to deliver His people so that He would be glorified among

the nations, and the Gentiles would have no reason to think God had forsaken them.

i. "It was very natural that the heathen should say, 'Where is their God?' because they had no outward emblem, no visible image, no tangible token; whereas the heathen had their gods many, such as they were, made of wood and stone; so that they asked, 'Where is their God?'" (Spurgeon)

2. (3-8) *Yahweh's exaltation over the idols of the nations.*

**But our God *is* in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.
Their idols *are* silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;
They have ears, but they do not hear;
Noses they have, but they do not smell;
They have hands, but they do not handle;
Feet they have, but they do not walk;
Nor do they mutter through their throat.
Those who make them are like them;
*So is everyone who trusts in them.***

a. **But our God is in heaven:** At best, nations worshipped imaginary beings and the projections of their own lusts and longing. At worst, the nations worshipped demonic spirits. Yet Yahweh, the covenant **God** of Israel is different. He lives and reigns **in heaven**, and sovereignly **does whatever He pleases**.

i. **Our God is in heaven:** "Where he should be; above the reach of mortal sneers, over-hearing all the vain janglings of men, but looking down with silent scorn upon the makers of the babel." (Spurgeon)

b. **They have mouths, but they do not speak:** The psalmist exposed the folly of idolatry. Men worshipped statues of **silver and gold** that they themselves made (**the work of men's hands**). The idols were fashioned with human body parts (**mouths, eyes, ears, noses, hands, feet**, and a **throat**). Yet they couldn't do with those body parts what their makers could – **speak, see, hear, smell, handle, walk**, or even **mutter**. Men worship things so obviously *below* them!

i. "The tone of the description is like that of the manufacture of an image in Isa 44:9-20." (Maclaren)

ii. "It is one of the places where Scripture, like the child in the story of the Emperor's New Clothes, takes a cool stare at what the world does not care to admit. What the psalm does to the gods, Ecclesiastes will do supremely to man and his ambitions." (Kidner)

iii. **Eyes they have, but they do not see:** "Certain idols have had jewels in their eyes more precious than a king's ransom, but they were as blind as the rest of the fraternity. A god who has eyes, and cannot see, is a blind deity; and blindness is a calamity, and not an attribute of godhead. He must be very blind who worships a blind god: we *pity* a blind man, it is strange to *worship* a blind image." (Spurgeon)

iv. **They do not smell:** "In sacred scorn he mocks at those who burn sweet spices, and fill their temples with clouds of smoke, all offered to an image whose nose cannot perceive the perfume." (Spurgeon)

v. **They do not walk:** John Trapp related how an ancient city, under siege, put a chain on their idol statue of Hercules, so he would not abandon them in their time of need. Hercules did not go anywhere, but they were still conquered. "The [smallest] insect has

more power of [movement] than the greatest heathen god." (Spurgeon)

vi. **Nor do they mutter:** "*Mutter, or make a noise*, as this word signifies, Isa 10:14. They are so far from speaking with their throat and other instruments of speech as men do, that they cannot make such an inarticulate and senseless sound with them as the beasts do." (Poole)

vii. "A beautiful contrast is formed between the God of Israel and the heathen idols. He made everything, they themselves are made by men; he is in heaven, they are upon earth; he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, they can do nothing; he seeth the distress, heareth and answereth the prayers, accepteth the offerings, cometh to the assistance, and effecteth the salvation of his servants; they are blind, deaf, and silent senseless, motionless, and impotent." (Horne)

ix. Boice quoted Augustine's sharp addition to the indictment of idols and their worshippers: "Even the dead surpass a deity who neither lives nor has lived."

c. **Those who make them are like them:** The psalmist understood that when men worship things beneath them, it brings them lower. They begin to lose the strength of their own ability to perceive and interact with the world. All who **make** or all who trust in idols will have this as their destiny, and false gods draw men down, never up.

i. **Those who make them are like them** is virtually a spiritual law: *we become like what we worship*. When we worship the true God who reigns in righteousness, the God perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ, we become like Him. When we worship false and vain idols, we become like them.

ii. "False worship is not innocent but demoralizing, and ultimately the worshipers will perish together with their perishable idols." (VanGemeran)

iii. "Worship is sure to breed likeness. A lustful, cruel god will make his devotees so. Men make gods after their own image, and, when made, the gods make men after theirs. The same principle which degrades the idolater lifts the Christian to the likeness of Christ." (Maclaren)

iv. F.B. Meyer observed how this principle worked among those who worship idols: "Men first impute to their deities their own vices, as the Greeks and Romans to the gods and goddesses of their Pantheon; and then endeavor to honor them by imitation." He then noted how it worked in a positive sense among the disciples of Jesus: "This is the Divine method: look and live; trust and be transfigured; abide in Him, and He shall abide in you."

B. Israel called to trust in the LORD and to receive His blessing.

1. (9-11) A call to trust in the LORD.

O Israel, trust in the LORD;

He is their help and their shield.

O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD;

He is their help and their shield.

You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD;

He is their help and their shield.

a. **O Israel, trust in the LORD:** Knowing the folly of idolatry should renew our trust in the true God and compel us to look to Him as our **help** and **shield**. In this we have something of Peter's heart when he said, *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life* (Joh 6:68).

i. We see the singer's exhortation was not merely to *trust the LORD*, but to **trust in** Him. This goes beyond regarding Him as trustworthy, and actually placing our trust, our confidence, our reliance in Him and not in self or any idol.

ii. Despite our many disappointments when we look to other places for a **help** and a **shield**, we often repeat the mistake. We need to hear the commonsense exhortation to look nowhere else for help and protection.

iii. "He is the succour, support, guardian, and defence of all who put their confidence in him." (Clarke)

iv. We can imagine an idolater having to help and shield the idol he made or bought. It's much better to have a God who can be *your* help and shield.

b. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: If God's people as a whole should trust God, then those who are His appointed servants should trust Him even more. It was right and good for all the priesthood, all the **house of Aaron**, to regard the God of Israel as **their help and their shield**.

i. "Ministers must be patterns to others of depending upon God, and living by faith." (Trapp)

ii. "You who are nearest to him, trust him most; your very calling is connected with his truth and is meant to declare his glory, therefore never entertain a doubt concerning him, but lead the way in holy confidence." (Spurgeon)

c. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: Those who truly respect and reverence Yahweh should take the logical step of putting their **trust in the LORD**. This third group (**you who fear the LORD**) may refer to Gentiles

who loved and honored the God of Israel yet did not become Jews.

i. In the New Testament such people are known as *God fearers* (Act 10:1-2; Act 13:16; Act 13:26), and the title may have come from such Old Testament passages as these. The Old Testament writers recognized Gentiles who honored the God of Israel (1Ki 8:41, Isa 56:6).

ii. **You who fear the LORD:** "These are most naturally understood as proselytes, and, in the prominence given to them we see the increasing consciousness in Israel of its Divine destination to be God's witness to the world." (Maclaren)

iii. The thought of encouraging those who **fear the LORD** – God-fearers, Gentiles who honor the God of Israel – to trust in God must have sounded especially sweet to Jesus on the night of the last supper, knowing how great the harvest among the Gentiles would soon be.

2. (12-13) The confident assurance of those who make the LORD their help and shield.

**The LORD has been mindful of us;
He will bless us;
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
He will bless those who fear the LORD,
Both small and great.**

a. **The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless us:** The psalmist drew upon God's past faithfulness and used it as confidence in God's future blessing. He has not forgotten us in the past and He will not forget to **bless** us in the future.

i. "God hath, and therefore God will, is an ordinary Scripture argument." (Trapp)

ii. **He will bless us:** "It is his nature to bless, it is his prerogative to bless, it is his glory to bless, it is his delight to bless; he has promised to bless, and therefore be sure of this, that he will bless and bless and bless without ceasing." (Spurgeon)

b. **He will bless the house of Israel:** Blessings were pronounced upon all those who were called to trust in the Lord in verses 9-11. All who trust Him will be blessed, **both small and great.**

i. We take comfort that the **small** are mentioned first, meaning they will not be forgotten. "God's blessing is for you, whoever you may be, if you will only stop trusting in yourself and your own devices and instead begin to trust God." (Boice)

3. (14-15) *A blessing pronounced.*

**May the LORD give you increase more and more,
You and your children.**

**May you be blessed by the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.**

a. **May the LORD give you increase more and more:** In the world of ancient Israel, many looked to the idols of the nations for fertility and the prosperity of their fields, their flocks, and their families. In giving this blessing to those of us who fear and trust the LORD, the psalmist recognized Yahweh as the true source of such blessing, extending even to our **children.**

b. **May you be blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth:** Once again in this psalm, Yahweh is exalted above the idols of the nations. He alone has **made heaven and earth.**

i. "If he blesseth, poverty cannot starve thee, sickness cannot kill thee, toil cannot wear thee out, sorrow cannot consume thee, life cannot allure thee, death cannot slay thee, hell cannot enclose thee."
(Spurgeon)

4. (16-18) *Heaven, earth, and praise forevermore.*

**The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's;
But the earth He has given to the children of men.
The dead do not praise the LORD,
Nor any who go down into silence.
But we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's:**
The psalmist recognized God's authority as Creator over both heaven and earth (verse 15). Here he acknowledged God's continuing dominion over **the heavens**, probably in all three senses (the blue sky, the starry sky, and the heaven where God dwells).

b. **The earth He has given to the children of men:**
Though God has authority over earth as the Creator, He has **given** a significant dominion on the earth to **the children of men**. The psalmist must have had in mind God's grant to Adam (and his descendants) of dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26-30).

i. This dominion **given** by God means that men and women should use the earth and its resources for the good of humanity, as wise and thoughtful stewards. We can use, but we should not waste and destroy.

ii. "The earth is man's, but by Jehovah's gift. Therefore its inhabitants should remember the terms of their tenure, and thankfully recognise His giving love." (Maclaren)

iii. "All is his, but we are his substantial heirs and trustees. There is generosity in the phrase, 'the earth he has given'; there is responsibility as well, for we are not its makers, nor is it simply 'there' as meaningless matter to exploit. Behind the gift is the Giver." (Kidner)

c. **The dead do not praise the LORD:** Their voice is no longer heard *among* the living. Whatever heavenly choir they may join, they are absent from an earthly choir, and their praise will no longer testify to those who resist and reject the true God.

i. When Jesus sang this with His disciples (Mat 26:30, Mar 14:26), He sang knowing that He would not sing among His disciples on earth anymore. Consider the depth of feeling in Jesus that would bring!

d. **From this time forth and forevermore:** Given the perceived uncertainty of praise in the life to come, the greatness of God, and the astounding blessing He has given to humanity, He is worthy to be praised **forevermore**. This is something to which God's people can say *Hallelujah!* (**Praise the LORD!**)

i. **From this time forth and forevermore** may have the sense, *in this life and the life to come*. There are only two times we should **praise the LORD** – *now* and *forever*.

ii. "We who are still living will take care that the praises of God shall not fail among the sons of men. Our afflictions and depressions of spirit shall not cause us to suspend our praises." (Spurgeon)

iii. If the praise is to last **forevermore**, then it *does* extend into the world to come, even when the voice of praise is no longer heard on earth.

iv. "Though the dead cannot, and the wicked will not, and the careless do not praise God, yet we will shout 'Hallelujah' for ever and ever. Amen." (Spurgeon)

v. "And again the thought reverts to the upper room, and the Singer Whose deepest passion was ever the will of God and the glory of His name; to the One Who was soon going into the silence where no note of praise would be heard; and yet to the One Who would turn the silence into song forevermore." (Morgan)

I Love the Lord

Psa 116:1 I love the LORD, because he hears me; he listens to my prayers.

Psa 116:2 He listens to me every time I call to him.

Psa 116:3 The danger of death was all around me; the horrors of the grave closed in on me; I was filled with fear and anxiety.

Psa 116:4 Then I called to the LORD, "I beg you, LORD, save me!"

Psa 116:5 The LORD is merciful and good; our God is compassionate.

Psa 116:6 The LORD protects the helpless; when I was in danger, he saved me.

Psa 116:7 Be confident, my heart, because the LORD has been good to me.

Psa 116:8 The LORD saved me from death; he stopped my tears and kept me from defeat.

Psa 116:9 And so I walk in the presence of the LORD in the world of the living.

Psa 116:10 I kept on believing, even when I said, "I am completely crushed,"

Psa 116:11 even when I was afraid and said, "No one can be trusted."

Psa 116:12 What can I offer the LORD for all his goodness to me?

Psa 116:13 I will bring a wine offering to the LORD, to thank him for saving me.

Psa 116:14 In the assembly of all his people I will give him what I have promised.

Psa 116:15 How painful it is to the LORD when one of his people dies!

Psa 116:16 I am your servant, LORD; I serve you just as my mother did. You have saved me from death.

Psa 116:17 I will give you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and offer my prayer to you.

Psa 116:18 (18-19) In the assembly of all your people, in the sanctuary of your Temple in Jerusalem, I will give you what I have promised. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 116:1-19

Psalms 116 – Paying the Vow of Gratitude

As another one of the Egyptian Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113-118), sung by Jesus with His disciples on the night of His betrayal and arrest (Mat 26:30 and Mar 14:26), we can say with G. Campbell Morgan: "Whatever the local circumstances which gave rise to this song, it is evident that all its rich meaning was fulfilled, when in the midst of that little company of perplexed souls, the shadows of the One Death already on Him, Jesus sang this song of prophetic triumph over the sharpness of the hour of passion to which He was passing. He has made it over to all His own as their triumph song over death."

A. A life rescued.

1. (1-2) *Loving the LORD who answers prayer.*

**I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice *and* my supplications.**

**Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.**

a. **I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice:** The psalmist began his song with the most simple expression of grateful love. He had a great love for Yahweh because He answered prayer in a desperate season.

i. "How vain and foolish is the *talk*, 'To love God for his benefits to us is mercenary, and cannot be pure love!' Whether pure or impure, there is no other love that can flow from the heart of the creature to its Creator." (Clarke)

ii. "They say that love is blind; but when we love God our affection has its eyes open and can sustain itself with the most rigid logic. We have reason, superabundant reason, for loving the Lord." (Spurgeon)

b. **I will call upon Him as long as I live:** The singer vowed to never call upon any other supposed deity. His allegiance, love, and prayer would always be to the One who **inclined His ear to me**.

i. "It is a resolve to trust God exclusively...and worship him explicitly." (Kidner)

2. (3-4) *Prayer from one in the pains of death.*

**The pains of death surrounded me,
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;
I found trouble and sorrow.
Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
"O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!"**

a. **The pains of death surrounded me:** In the painful grip of death, the psalmist knew nothing but **trouble and sorrow**. This death crisis may have come from sickness, injury, or persecution.

i. **Pains of death...pangs of Sheol:** "In Old Testament poetry *death* and *Sheol* are aggressive, clutching at the living to waste them with sickness or crush them with despondency; so the singer's plight may equally have been a desperate illness or (as verse 11 suggests) a wounding and disillusioning experience. Like Job's, it could well have been both together." (Kidner)

ii. Many centuries later Peter used the phrase **the pains of death** to describe the peril from which God the Father delivered Jesus Christ through His resurrection (Act 2:24). It adds a powerful prophetic and messianic meaning to the psalm, since this was one of the psalms Jesus would have sung with His disciples at the last supper (Mat 26:30, Mar 14:26).

iii. Perhaps while singing this phrase Jesus considered the linen windings that would soon be wrapped around His dead body. "...the *cables* or *cords of death*; alluding to their bonds and fetters during their captivity; or to the cords by which a criminal is bound who is about to be led out to execution; or to the bandages in which the dead were enveloped, when head, arms, body, and limbs were all *laced down* together." (Clarke)

b. **Then I called upon the name of the LORD:** In his deadly danger, the psalmist cried out to God in light of of all He is and represents (**the name of the LORD**). His cry was:

- Delivered straight to God: **O LORD.**
- Deeply felt: **I implore You.**
- Directly stating the need: **Deliver my soul.**

i. "This form of petition is short, comprehensive, to the point, humble, and earnest. It were well if all our

prayers were moulded upon this model; perhaps they would be if we were in similar circumstances to those of the Psalmist, for real trouble produces real prayer.” (Spurgeon)

3. (5-7) *Praising the God who preserves us.*

**Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God is merciful.
The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.
Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.**

a. **Gracious is the LORD, and righteous:** In light of his deliverance through answered prayer, the psalmist praised the **gracious, righteous, and merciful** character of God.

i. Before His obedient surrender to the ordeal of His suffering and crucifixion, Jesus sang these words with His disciples (Mat 26:30, Mar 14:26). He testified to the truth that God was **gracious, righteous, and merciful** before, during, and after His ordeal.

b. **The LORD preserves the simple:** In humility, the psalmist counted himself as one who did not exalt himself above others and who might be considered **simple**. He didn't have to exalt himself, because when he **was brought low**, God brought His salvation.

i. **“The simple;** sincere and plain-hearted persons, who dare not use those frauds and crafty and wicked artifices in saving themselves or destroying their enemies, but wait upon God with honest hearts in his way and for his time of deliverance. Such persons he calls *simple* or *foolish*, as this word is commonly rendered, not because they are really so, but because the world esteems them so.” (Poole)

ii. **The simple:** "It is humble of the psalmist to identify with them; it is humble of God to have time for them." (Kidner)

iii. In its messianic aspect, we consider these words sung and spoken by Jesus among His disciples. He was far from a **simple** man, but was considered so by the proud and arrogant religious hierarchy, who despised His lack of formal credentials and training.

iv. "Not only is God gracious, he is also gracious to the little people, to the plain, to commoners, to the everyday person on the bus or in the shop – to people like the psalmist. That is one of the great glories of our God. When Jesus called his disciples, he called fishermen and tax collectors. When the angels announced the birth of Jesus, they appeared to shepherds." (Boice)

v. **He saved me:** "The knowledge that David had of God's goodness was experiential.... A carnal man knoweth God's excellencies and will revealed in his word only, as we know far countries by maps; but an experienced Christian, as one that hath himself been long there." (Trapp)

vi. "Happy the man who, like the psalmist, can give confirmation from his own experience to the broad truths of God's protection to ingenuous and guileless souls!" (Maclaren)

c. **Return to your rest, O my soul:** For a season, the death-like crisis had troubled the soul of the psalmist. Now he could reflect on how God had **dealt bountifully** with him, and he had come back to a previous standing of **rest**. There is true **rest** for our soul in God's bounty.

i. "The word 'rest' is put in the plural, as indicating complete and entire rest, at all times, and under all

circumstances." (Edersheim, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "Oh, learn this holy art; acquaint thyself with God, acquiesce in him, and be at peace; so shall good be done unto thee." (Trapp)

iii. "Whenever a child of God even for a moment loses his peace of mind, he should be concerned to find it again, not by seeking it in the world or in his own experience, but in the Lord alone." (Spurgeon)

4. (8-11) The testimony of the one delivered.

**For You have delivered my soul from death,
My eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.
I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
I believed, therefore I spoke,
"I am greatly afflicted."
I said in my haste,
"All men *are* liars."**

a. **You have delivered my soul from death:** The crisis was deep, even unto death. The deliverance was great, bringing comfort to tearful eyes and strength to falling feet. This powerful praise matched the greatness of the deliverance.

i. "He is recalling the agitation which shook him, but feels that, through it all, there was an unshaken centre of rest in God. The presence of doubt and fear does not prove the absence of trust." (Maclaren)

ii. Once again we are moved by the thought that Jesus sang these words with His disciples on the night of His betrayal and arrest. Knowing all the suffering set before Him, Jesus sang with confidence of deliverance from His coming **death**, His coming **tears**,

and **falling** under the weight of the cross soon to come.

b. **I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living:** These were the grateful words of the psalmist *after* his deliverance. They were also the confident words, sung in faith, by Jesus before every agony of the coming cross. He could go to the cross with full confidence that having been rescued from falling feet, He would once again walk **in the land of the living**.

i. "To *walk before the Lord*, like the New Testament expression to 'walk in the light', is both demanding and reassuring, since...one is wholly exposed but wholly befriended." (Kidner)

ii. "By a man's walk is understood his way of life: some men live only as in the sight of their fellow men, having regard to human judgment and opinion; but the truly gracious man considers the presence of God, and acts under the influence of his all-observing eye." (Spurgeon)

c. **I believed, therefore I spoke:** Full of faith, the psalmist trusted God in the depth of his distress. He was a shadowy preview of the greatest faith, demonstrated by Jesus among His disciples before the cross.

i. The Apostle Paul took this line (**I believed, therefore I spoke**) and applied the principle to his own times of trusting God and speaking from the experience of that trust, even in trying times (2Co 4:13-14).

ii. "Paul quotes the Septuagint form of the verse: 'I believed, and so I spoke' (2Co 4:13), which is stronger than our Hebrew text. But the latter agrees in making faith the underlying attitude of the

speaker, even though it is faith hard-pressed.” (Kidner)

iii. “Walter Kaiser remarks from Paul’s quotation of Psa 116:10 in 2Co 4:13 that it was the same Holy Spirit who worked in the psalmist, Paul, and all other Christians to believe.” (VanGemeren)

d. **All men are liars:** The bitter experience of the psalmist made this seem like a logical statement, but that was a hasty conclusion. Though forsaken by all His disciples (and partners in song), Jesus would not come to this hasty conclusion.

i. There is one way in which the statement is true, because “...all men will prove to be liars if we unduly trust in them; some from want of truthfulness, and others from want of power” (Spurgeon). Yet the phrasing makes it clear that the psalmist understood that he was wrong at this time in saying so. The judgment was too harsh in his present circumstances.

ii. **I said in my haste:** “Speaking in haste is generally followed by bitter repentance. It is much better to be quiet when our spirit is disturbed and hasty, for it is so much easier to say than to unsay; we may repent of our words, but we cannot so recall them as to undo the mischief they have done.” (Spurgeon)

B. A life of gratitude.

1. (12-14) Thankfully receiving and responding.

What shall I render to the LORD

For all His benefits toward me?

I will take up the cup of salvation,

And call upon the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows to the LORD

Now in the presence of all His people.

a. **What shall I render to the LORD?** Gratitude drove the psalmist to consider what return he could make to the God who had so generously shared **His benefits**, making the psalmist like the one grateful leper among the ten Jesus healed (Luk 17:12-19).

i. The psalmist wisely considered *why God had been so good to him* instead of *why he had problems at all*. He knew that problems were common to all men, but the benefits often only belonged to those who trusted God.

ii. **All His benefits:** "His benefits are so many, so various, so minute, that they often escape our observation while they exactly meet our wants." (Spurgeon)

b. **I will take up the cup of salvation:** Gratitude drove the psalmist to *receive* from God. Before we can do anything for Him, we begin by gratefully receiving.

i. "It is a profound insight: The only way we can repay God from whom everything comes is by taking even more from him." (Boice)

ii. "We can do this figuratively at the sacramental table, we can do it spiritually every time we grasp the golden chalice of the covenant, realizing the fulness of blessing which it contains, and by faith receiving its divine contents into our inmost soul." (Spurgeon)

iii. There is a connection between the phrases, **I will take up the cup of salvation** and **call upon the name of the LORD**. "The cup of salvation is the cup of blessing, which is given to the soul. Let the soul take it and drink it, but let him remember that the very partaking is in itself of the nature of a pledge of loyalty; it is the oath of allegiance in which he calls upon the Name of Jehovah." (Morgan)

iv. We continue to marvel at how significant it is that Jesus sang *these words* on the night of His betrayal and arrest, having instituted the **cup of salvation** under the New Covenant with His apostles (Luk 22:20). Jesus *received* that **cup of salvation** from His Father and gave it unto His people.

v. "Within a very little while after this singing, He, in Gethsemane, spoke of a cup, and in complete surrender to His Father's will, consented to drink it. That was the cup of sorrows, of bitterness, of cursing. Having emptied it, He filled it with joy, with sweetness, with blessing. When we take that cup let us never forget the cost at which He so filled it for us." (Morgan)

c. **I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people:** The singer publically declared – perhaps in a sacrificial ritual of gratitude at the temple's altar – God's greatness and faithfulness. He would complete what he had determined to do before God.

i. "He presently resolveth to make the only return in his power, namely, to acknowledge and declare before men the goodness of Jehovah, ascribing all the glory where it is all due." (Horne)

ii. "This word 'pay' importeth that vows lawfully made are due debt; and debt, till paid, is a disquieting thing to an honest mind." (Trapp)

iii. How *moving* it was for Jesus to sing these words, when *He Himself* was about to become that sacrifice!

iv. "Foxe, in his Acts and Monuments, relates the following concerning the martyr, John Philpot: He went with the sheriffs to the place of execution... coming into Smithfield, he kneeled down there, saying

these words, 'I will pay my vows in thee, O Smithfield.'" (Spurgeon)

2. (15-17) *A life gratefully pledged.*

Precious in the sight of the LORD

Is the death of His saints.

O LORD, truly I *am* Your servant;

I *am* Your servant, the son of Your maidservant;

You have loosed my bonds.

I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving,

And will call upon the name of the LORD.

a. **Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints:** This psalm celebrates the deliverance from death, but the singer knew that death is still a reality for every one of God's **saints**. When that day comes, God holds the **death** of His people as a **precious** thing.

i. "The more usual form of expression for the idea in Psa 116:15 is 'their blood is precious'. [Psa 72:14] The meaning is that the death of God's saints is no trivial thing in God's eyes, to be lightly permitted." (Maclaren)

ii. "God is particularly close to his people when they stand at death's door. God watches over his people when they are sick or dying, coming close to them and making his presence known so that they have comfort in death's hour. He also frequently intervenes and does not allow them to perish. In either case, the Lord does what is best." (Boice)

iii. God regards the death of His martyrs as especially **precious**. "Though they have been cast to the beasts in the amphitheatre, or dragged to death by wild horses, or murdered in dungeons, or slaughtered amongst the snows of the Alps, or made to fatten

Smithfield with their gore, precious has their blood been, and still is it in his sight." (Spurgeon)

iv. Though death is a curse and an enemy, it is still precious because it removes the remaining barriers between God and His saints, and is the doorway to an eternity of perfect fellowship. "Death to the saints is not a penalty, it is not destruction, it is not even a loss." (Spurgeon)

v. "When Baxter lay a dying, and his friends came to see him, almost the last word he said was in answer to the question, 'Dear Mr. Baxter, how are you?' 'Almost well,' said he, and so it is. Death cures; it is the best medicine, for they who die are not only almost well, but healed for ever." (Spurgeon)

vi. As Jesus sang these words with His disciples on the night before His own death (Mat 26:30, Mar 14:26), the words were powerful and prophetic. Jesus was the ultimate holy one and His death **precious** beyond all reckoning.

b. **O LORD, truly I am Your servant:** The singer dedicated himself to God's service on the basis of **loosed** bonds. Set free by God's great work, both honor and gratitude led him to forever be Yahweh's **servant**.

i. Adam Clarke saw here the words of a bondservant, as in Exo 21:5-6 : "I am a *servant*, son of *thy servant*, made free by thy kindness; but, refusing *to go out*, I have had my *ear bored to thy door-post*, and am to continue by *free choice* in thy house for ever."

ii. **The son of Your maidservant:** "Bless God for the privilege of being the children of godly parents. Better be the child of a godly than of a wealthy parent. I hope none of you are of so vile a spirit as to contemn

your parents because of their piety.” (Manton, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **The son of Your maidservant:** “Alas, there are many who are the sons of the Lord’s handmaids, but they are not themselves his servants. They give sad proof that grace does not run in the blood.” (Spurgeon)

c. **I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving:** Once again (before in verse 14) we find ourselves at the altar of sacrifice with the singer. He was happy and duty-bound to proclaim his gratitude to God and to **call upon** Him alone.

3. (18-19) *Vows gratefully paid.*

**I will pay my vows to the LORD
Now in the presence of all His people,
In the courts of the LORD’s house,
In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **I will pay my vows to the LORD:** The repetition of this phrase (before in verse 14) keeps us at the altar with a public sacrifice of thanksgiving. There, **in the courts of the LORD’s house**, the psalmist would proclaim his praise and gratitude toward God.

i. **Now in the presence of all His people:** “Once more the lonely suppliant, who had waded such deep waters without companion but Jehovah, seeks to feel himself one of the glad multitude in the courts of the house of Jehovah, and to blend his single voice in the shout of a nation’s praise. We suffer and struggle for the most part alone. Grief is a hermit, but Joy is sociable; and thankfulness desires listeners to its praise.” (Maclaren)

b. **Praise the LORD:** The psalm ends with *Hallelujah*, both as a declaration of personal praise and a call to God's people to join with the proclamation.

The Lord's Faithfulness Endures Forever

Psa 117:1 Praise the LORD, all nations! Praise him, all peoples!

Psa 117:2 His love for us is strong, and his faithfulness is eternal. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 117:1-2

Psalms 117 ñ Calling All Peoples to Praise the LORD

“This is the shortest song in the whole collection, but there is none greater or grander in its expression of praise.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

“Martin Luther devoted thirty-six pages to this psalm, expounding it in four important categories: (1) prophecy (the Gentiles will participate in gospel blessings), (2) revelation (the kingdom of Christ is not earthly and temporal but rather heavenly and eternal), (3) instruction (we are saved by faith alone and not by works, wisdom, or holiness), and (4) admonition (we should praise God for such a great salvation).” (James Montgomery Boice)

A. The call to praise.

1. (1) *Gentiles called to praise the LORD.*

Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!

Laud Him, all you peoples!

a. **Praise the LORD:** Previous psalms called on Israel to give **praise** to Yahweh, but here **all** the **Gentiles** are called to praise Him. This showed a largeness of heart that God intended Israel to have from the beginning, pointing to the truth that in Abraham all the peoples of the world were to be blessed (Gen 12:3).

i. `For the most part the Jews looked with little sympathy on their Gentile neighbors, and had no desire that they should laud Jehovah, save as they became proselytes of Judaism. But where the love of God is strong in the heart, it overleaps the bounds of custom and racial prejudice, and yearns that all the world should know and love the Saviour.` (Meyer)

ii. `The Psalm was an intimation to Israel that the grace and mercy of their God were not to be confined to one nation, but would in happier days be extended to all the race of man.` (Spurgeon)

iii. Since this is one of the six Egyptian Hallel Psalms (113-118), sung as part of the Passover service, Jesus would have sung Psalms 117 with His disciples (Mat 26:30, Mar 14:26). Therefore, on the eve of His crucifixion, we *know* that Jesus had all the peoples, all the Gentiles in mind. Through His work on the cross and victory over death at the empty tomb, God would call a people to Himself from every tribe and tongue.

iv. `The historical limitations of God's manifestation to a special nation were means to its universal diffusion. The fire was gathered in a grate, that it might warm the whole house. All men have a share in what God does for Israel.` (Maclaren)

b. **Laud Him, all you peoples:** To **laud** is to say praiseworthy things about a person. The psalmist called upon **all peoples** to praise God intelligently, and he provided reasons why He is worthy of worship.

i. `Inasmuch as the matter is spoken of twice, its certainty is confirmed, and the Gentiles must and shall extol Jehovah.` (Spurgeon)

ii. Some suggest that **all you peoples** refers to the Jewish people, but Paul's quotation of Psa 117:1 in Rom 15:11 leads us to believe that this is a call to the nations.

iii. The word for **peoples** suggests all the *tribes* of the earth. 'The very diversity of God's subjects comes out in the expressions *all nations...all tribes*.' (Kidner)

iv. 'Here then is a true Christian universalism, not that all people will be saved regardless of the god they believe in, but rather that all people may be saved through Jesus Christ.' (Boice)

v. The call to **all you peoples** makes this a strong missionary psalm. 'Are we doing all we can to kindle the nations to praise? They cannot praise Him whom they do not know. It is mere hypocrisy to bid them praise Him, if we have never sought to spread, by lip or gift, the mercy and truth revealed in Jesus our Lord.' (Meyer)

B. The reasons for praise.

1. (2) *Praising God for His mercy and truth.*

**For His merciful kindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **For His merciful kindness is great:** In thinking of reasons to praise God, the psalmist first lists, because of His **great** + *hesed* (**merciful kindness**). The Hebrew actually has **His hesed hesed + is great**, with the idea of God's loyal, covenant love repeated twice for emphasis.

i. **Is great:** The Hebrew word doesn't have the thought of *exceedingly large*, but as something that is mighty and prevails. 'Gabar, is *strong*: it is not only *great* in *bulk* or *number*, but it is *powerful*; it *prevails* over *sin*, *Satan*, *death*, and *hell*.' (Clarke)

ii. ìÖlovingkindness is ëmighty over usí ñ the word used for being mighty has the sense of prevailing, and so ëwhere sin abounded, grace did much more abound.î (Maclaren)

b. **Great toward us:** This is further reason for praise; not only does God have **great** lovingkindness, but that **merciful kindness** is **toward us**. By **us** the psalmist has in mind Israel and the *all peoples* as mentioned in the previous verse.

i. ìTowards all of us, all the children of Abraham, whether carnal or spiritual, who were to be incorporated together, and made one body and one fold by and under the Messias, Joh 10:16, Eph 2:14, which mystery seems to be insinuated by this manner of expression.î (Poole)

ii. ìIt may also be that the ëusí of verse 2 has already found room for the ëyouí implied in verse 1, by seeing Israelites and Gentiles as one people under God.î (Kidner)

c. **The truth of the LORD endures forever:** God is to be praised not only for His loyal love, but also for His **truth**. His ever-enduring truth means that He will not change in His love and goodness to us.

i. When mercy and truth are praised together like this, it reminds us that *the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* (Joh 1:17).

ii. ìIf God stood for truth alone, there would be no hope for us. On the other hand, if the grace of God could act apart from truth, we should equally be without hope.î (Morgan)

iii. ìOnce again we can imagine with what perfect joy our Lord sang this song, as He moved to the

uttermost in His sorrows; for He did so in full and perfect apprehension of the union of lovingkindness and truth in God.î (Morgan)

iv. **Endures†forever**: ìNot only is his love so great in depth and height (cf. Rom 5:20; 1Ti 1:14), it is also lasting (ëendures foreverí).î (VanGemeren)

d. **Praise the LORD**: Once again, all peoples are called to say, *Hallelujah!*

i. ìBy the union of grace and truth, in and through Jesus, the call to praise went out to all nations and peoples.î (Morgan)

ii. ìLet the hallelujahs of the redeemed be suitable to that ëmercy,í and co-eternal with that ëtruth.î (Horne)

iii. ìIn Godís worship it is not always necessary to be long; few words sometimes say what is sufficient, as this short Psalm giveth us to understand.î (Dickson, cited in Spurgeon)

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Psa 118:1 Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good, and his love is eternal.

Psa 118:2 Let the people of Israel say, "His love is eternal."

Psa 118:3 Let the priests of God say, "His love is eternal."

Psa 118:4 Let all who worship him say, "His love is eternal."

Psa 118:5 In my distress I called to the LORD; he answered me and set me free.

Psa 118:6 The LORD is with me, I will not be afraid; what can anyone do to me?

Psa 118:7 It is the LORD who helps me, and I will see my enemies defeated.

Psa 118:8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to depend on people.

Psa 118:9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to depend on human leaders.

Psa 118:10 Many enemies were around me; but I destroyed them by the power of the LORD!

Psa 118:11 They were around me on every side; but I destroyed them by the power of the LORD!

Psa 118:12 They swarmed around me like bees, but they burned out as quickly as a brush fire; by the power of the LORD I destroyed them.

Psa 118:13 I was fiercely attacked and was being defeated, but the LORD helped me.

Psa 118:14 The LORD makes me powerful and strong; he has saved me.

Psa 118:15 Listen to the glad shouts of victory in the tents of God's people: "The LORD's mighty power has done it!

Psa 118:16 His power has brought us victory—his mighty power in battle!"

Psa 118:17 I will not die; instead, I will live and proclaim what the LORD has done.

Psa 118:18 He has punished me severely, but he has not let me die.

Psa 118:19 Open to me the gates of the Temple; I will go in and give thanks to the LORD!

Psa 118:20 This is the gate of the LORD; only the righteous can come in.

Psa 118:21 I praise you, LORD, because you heard me, because you have given me victory.

Psa 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all.

Psa 118:23 This was done by the LORD; what a wonderful sight it is!

Psa 118:24 This is the day of the LORD's victory; let us be happy, let us celebrate!

Psa 118:25 Save us, LORD, save us! Give us success, O LORD!

Psa 118:26 May God bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD! From the Temple of the LORD we bless you.

Psa 118:27 The LORD is God; he has been good to us. With branches in your hands, start the festival and march around the altar.

Psa 118:28 You are my God, and I give you thanks; I will proclaim your greatness.

Psa 118:29 Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good, and his love is eternal.

Psalms 118:1-29

Psalms 118 – The Chief Cornerstone

Psalms 118 does not name an author in its title, but there is reason to believe it was King David, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel. Ezr 3:10-11 suggests that Psalms 118 was sung at the founding of the second temple, and when they sang it, they attributed it to David ("according to the ordinance of David king of Israel," Ezr 3:10).

"Most probably David was the author of this psalm.... It partakes of David's spirit, and everywhere shows the hand of a master. The style is grand and noble; the subject, majestic." (Adam Clarke)

Though this was likely David's psalm, it was also Jesus' psalm. "This is pre-eminently the triumph song of the Christ, He the ideal Servant, He the perfect Priest, He the Leader of the people. How much all these words meant to Him as He sang them on that night in the upper room." (G. Campbell Morgan)

Though this was likely David's psalm, it was also Luther's psalm. "This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore I call it my own. When emperors and kings, the wise and the learned, and even saints could not aid me, this psalm proved a friend and helped me out of many great troubles. As a result, it is dearer to me than all the wealth, honor, and power of the pope, the Turk, and the emperor. I would be most unwilling to trade this psalm for all of it." (Martin Luther, cited by James Montgomery Boice)

A. Praising God for His great mercy and deliverance.

1. (1-4) Calling a congregation to declare Yahweh's never-ending mercy.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!*

For His mercy *endures* forever.

Let Israel now say,

"His mercy *endures* forever."

Let the house of Aaron now say,

"His mercy *endures* forever."

Let those who fear the LORD now say,

"His mercy *endures* forever."

a. **Give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good*:** Many of the psalms call upon God's people to thank Him. Psalms 118 opens with an *emphatic* call, indicated by the word **Oh**. God's goodness is so great and apparent that it deserves emphatic thanks.

i. **For *He is good*:** "This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not. Those who only praise God because he *does* them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to him because he *is* good." (Spurgeon)

b. **For His mercy endures forever:** This psalm begins and ends with this declaration. It is a statement of fact and of gratitude, noting that God's *hesed* – His loyal covenant love, His lovingkindness – will never be taken from His people.

i. **For His mercy endures forever:** In the psalms, this phrase has almost a liturgical quality to it. It is used 34 times and is an appreciative declaration of God's people, praising the great lovingkindness or covenant love of God.

ii. "Other psalms confirm the familiarity of this call to worship (106:1; 136:1), and show the opportunity it gave to cantor and congregation to rehearse the great acts of God together (136:1-26)." (Kidner)

iii. "The word *endureth* has been properly supplied by the translators, but yet it somewhat restricts the sense, which will be better seen if we read it, '*for his mercy for ever.*' That mercy had no beginning, and shall never know an end." (Spurgeon)

iv. This psalm is the last of the six Egyptian Hallel Psalms, sung in Jesus' day as part of the Passover ritual. When Mat 26:30 and Mar 14:26 tell us that Jesus sang a hymn with His disciples at the last supper, it refers to these Hallel Psalms. As Jesus sang the words **for His mercy endures forever**, He did it with complete knowledge that the endurance of God's mercy would be tested to the utmost in the work to come the next day at the cross.

c. **Let Israel now say:** The psalmist invited the people of **Israel**, the priests of **the house of Aaron**, and even Gentiles who honored God (**those who fear the LORD**) to join in the emphatic chorus, **His mercy endures forever**.

i. "Three classes are called on: the whole house of Israel, the priests, and 'those who fear Jehovah' – *i.e.*, aliens who have taken refuge beneath the wings of Israel's God" (Maclaren). This suggests that the song was written with distinct parts meant for different groups in the congregation.

ii. **The house of Aaron:** "If this Psalm refers to David, the priests had special reason for thankfulness on his coming to the throne, for Saul had made a great slaughter among them, and had at various times interfered with their sacred office." (Spurgeon)

2. (5-9) *A testimony to His enduring mercy.*

I called on the LORD in distress;

The LORD answered me *and set me* in a broad place.

The LORD is on my side;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?

The LORD is for me among those who help me;

Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me.

It is better to trust in the LORD

Than to put confidence in man.

It is better to trust in the LORD

Than to put confidence in princes.

a. **I called on the LORD in distress:** The never-ending mercy of God was shown when **the LORD answered** the singer's cry of distress. God answered by setting the psalmist in a secure, **broad place** where he could confidently stand.

i. **I called on the LORD:** "Thou must learn to call, and not to sit there by thyself, and lie on the bench, hang and shake thy head, and bite and devour thyself with thy thoughts; but come on, thou indolent knave, down upon thy knees, up with thy hands and eyes to

heaven, take a Psalm or a prayer, and set forth thy distress with tears before God." (Luther, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "The true value of every deliverance is to be estimated by the nature of the 'distress' which required it." (Horne)

iii. It is wonderful to think of Jesus confidently singing these words with His disciples on the night of His betrayal and arrest, and before His suffering and crucifixion. Like none other ever, Jesus would call **on the LORD in distress** and see God's faithful answer.

b. **The LORD is on my side:** The never-ending mercy of God was shown by God's open favor and help to the one who called upon Him. Knowing God was on his side, he could live free from the **fear** of man, knowing **what can man do to me?**

i. **The LORD is on my side:** "We know very well the great anxiety shown by men, in all their worldly conflicts, to secure the aid of a powerful ally; in their lawsuits, to retain the services of a powerful advocate; or, in their attempts at worldly advancement, to win the friendship and interest of those who can further the aims they have in view.... If such and such a person be on their side, men think that all must go well. Who so well off as he who is able to say, '*The Lord is on my side*'?" (Power, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **I will not fear:** "He does not say that he should not suffer, but that he would not fear: the favour of God infinitely outweighed the hatred of men, therefore setting the one against the other he felt that he had no reason to be afraid." (Spurgeon)

c. **The LORD is for me:** Hundreds of years before the book of Romans was written, the psalmist understood the principle of Rom 8:31 : *If God is for us, who can be against us?* The psalmist had nothing to fear, even from **those who hated** him.

d. **It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man:** The psalmist knew it to be true, no doubt learned through the experience of bitter disappointments. Neither the common **man** or even **princes** among men could help the way God can help. It **is better to trust** Him!

i. **It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man:** Spurgeon suggested many reasons why this is true.

- It is better because it is wiser.
- It is better morally, fulfilling the duty of the creature to the Creator.
- It is better because it is safer.
- It is better in its direction, lifting us up instead of bowing us down.
- It is better in its outcome.

ii. Jesus knew this by His own experience as each of His disciples forsook Him at the cross, and even leaders who were sympathetic to Him (such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus) did not give their help to Jesus during His suffering and crucifixion.

iii. **Than to put confidence in princes:** "Men of high estate are generally *proud, vain-glorious, self-confident, and rash*: it is better to trust in God than in them. Often they *cannot* deliver, and often they *will not* when they *can*. However, in the concerns of our

salvation, and in matters which belong to *Providence*, they can do nothing." (Clarke)

iv. Spurgeon observed, "They are noblest in rank and mightiest in power, and yet as a rule, princes are not one whit more reliable than the rest of mankind." He also noted that a weathervane covered with gold turns in the wind just as easily as a weathervane made of tin.

v. Boice on Psa 118:8-9 : "It is reported by people who count such things that there are 31,174 verses in the Bible, and if that is so, then these verses, the 15,587th and the 15,588th, are the middle verses. That position should be reason enough to give them prominence."

3. (10-14) Surrounded by enemies but helped by God.

**All nations surrounded me,
But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
They surrounded me,
Yes, they surrounded me;
But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
They surrounded me like bees;
They were quenched like a fire of thorns;
For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
You pushed me violently, that I might fall,
But the LORD helped me.
The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.**

a. **All nations surrounded me:** In the pattern of Hebrew poetry, the idea is repeated for emphasis. The singer knew what it was to be trapped by enemies who swarmed **like bees**.

i. **I will destroy them:** "There is a grand touch of the *ego* in the last sentence, but it is so over-

shadowed with the name of the Lord that there is none too much of it." (Spurgeon)

ii. We picture Jesus singing these words, knowing that only a few hours later He would be truly surrounded by those who would mock, torture, and kill Him – with, no doubt, a multitude of

nations surrounding Him.

iii. **They surrounded me like bees:** "Christ's enemies are so spiteful, that in fighting against his kingdom, they regard not what become of themselves, so they may hurt his people; but as the bee undoeth herself in stinging, and loseth her life or her power with her sting, so do they." (Dickson, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. **They were quenched like a fire of thorns:** "But the Hebrew text looks beyond the 'blaze' of this *fire of thorns* to its extinction...for such a fire burns out as suddenly as it flares up, and the power of evil will turn out to be as short-lived as it was fierce." (Kidner)

b. **In the name of the LORD I will destroy them:** The psalmist understood that the power for victory was not in Himself, but only in the name of God. He would be rescued as **the LORD helped** him.

c. **The LORD is my strength and my song:** Quoting Miriam's song (Exo 15:2), the singer knew not only that God could *bring* **strength** and a **song**, but that Yahweh Himself *became* their **strength** and the **song** of those who put their trust in Him. Going even further, the psalmist understood that Yahweh had **become** his **salvation**. Yahweh *is* these things for His people.

i. When the LORD is our **strength**, it means that He is our resource and our refuge. We look to Him for our needs, and we are never unsatisfied.

ii. When the LORD is our **song**, it means that He is our joy and our happiness. We find our purpose and life in Him, and He never disappoints.

iii. When the LORD is our **salvation**, it means we put our trust for help and deliverance in none other. He is our rest and rescue.

iv. With all this true, it emphasizes the importance of seeking God Himself when we need **strength**, a **song**, or **salvation**. Often we seek the things themselves, sometimes as even detached from God Himself. To seek God and to receive Him is to receive all these profound gifts.

v. "Good songs, good promises, good proverbs, good doctrines are none the worse for age. What was sung just after the passage of the Red Sea, is here sung by the prophet, and shall be sung to the end of the world by the saints of the Most High." (Plumer, cited in Spurgeon)

vi. "Thus delivered, the singer breaks into the ancient strain, which had gone up on the shores of the sullen sea that rolled over Pharaoh's army, and is still true after centuries have intervened: 'Jah is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation.' Miriam sang it, the restored exiles sang it, tried and trustful men in every age have sung and will sing it, till there are no more foes; and then, by the shores of the sea of glass mingled with fire, the calm victors will lift again the undying 'song of Moses and of the Lamb.'" (Maclaren)

4. (15-18) Rejoicing in deliverance from death.

The voice of rejoicing and salvation

Is in the tents of the righteous;

The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.

**The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.
The LORD has chastened me severely,
But He has not given me over to death.**

a. **The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous:** Having received God's wonderful rescue, God's people give **voice** to their joy. It would be wrong for those who have received so much to be silent about it.

i. "'The tents of the righteous' may possibly allude to the 'tabernacles' constructed for the feast, at which the song was probably sung." (Maclaren)

ii. "Apart from its use during the Passover Seder, Psalms 118 was also sung during the Feast of Tabernacles, according to the Talmud (b. *Sukkoth* 45a-b)." (VanGemeren)

b. **The right hand of the LORD does valiantly:** Repeatedly (for emphasis), the singer praises the **right hand** of God, recognizing it as the hand of skill and strength. God will not use lesser measures to rescue His people.

c. **I shall not die, but live:** The psalmist was confident that God would keep him from death in the present crisis. As Jesus sang this song at the last supper with His disciples, He could proclaim this confidently – that death would keep no hold upon Him, but He would **live, and declare the works of the LORD.**

i. **I shall not die, but live:** Verse 17 was precious to John Wycliffe: "John Wycliffe, the Protestant Reformer, fell sick at one point as the result of his incessant labors for the gospel. The friars heard that

their enemy was dying and hastened to his bedside. Surely Wycliffe would be overcome with remorse for his Protestant heresies. Surely he would renounce his views and ask for God's forgiveness and the friars' blessing. A crowd of monks representing four major orders of the friars gathered around him. They began by wishing him health, then quickly changed their tune and urged him to make a full confession since he would soon have to give an accounting of himself to God. Wycliffe waited patiently until they had ended. Then, asking his servant to raise him a little so he could speak better, Wycliffe fixed his keen eyes on them and said in a commanding voice, 'I shall not die but live and proclaim...*the evil deeds of the friars.*'" (Boice)

ii. **I shall not die, but live:** Verse 17 was also precious to Martin Luther, who faced threats on his life due to his reformation efforts. "According to Matthesius, Luther had this verse written against his study wall." (Spurgeon)

d. **The LORD has chastened me severely:** The singer understood that God had a training and corrective purpose in allowing the present crisis, but God would not allow it to destroy him. Rather, the crisis would be of benefit.

i. These words had great meaning for Jesus before the cross, where He would endure the Father's purposeful suffering, yet not be **given...over to death.**

B. The Song of the Great Deliverer.

1. (19-20) *The open gates of righteousness.*

**Open to me the gates of righteousness;
I will go through them,**

***And I will praise the LORD.
This is the gate of the LORD,
Through which the righteous shall enter.***

a. **Open to me the gates of righteousness:** The psalmist probably had in mind a triumphal entry into the holy city. With those gates **open**, he would **go through them**, full of **praise to the LORD**.

i. In the song Jesus sang, He proclaimed His entrance into the ultimate reality of heaven, of which Jerusalem was only a representation. After His completed work on the cross, after His deliverance from death in the resurrection, He would be received in glory at the ascension.

ii. In that Jesus is a forerunner for His people, **open to me the gates of righteousness** can also be said by His people. "We may extend our ideas much further, and consider the whole company of the redeemed, as behold the angels ready to unbar the gates of heaven, and throw open the doors of the eternal sanctuary, for the true disciples of the risen and glorified Jesus to enter in. 'Open ye,' may believers exclaim in triumph, to those celestial spirits who delight to minister to the heirs of salvation." (Horne)

iii. "Alas, there are multitudes who do not care whether the gates of God's house are opened or not; and although they know that they are opened wide they never care to enter, neither does the thought of praising God so much as cross their minds. The time will come for them when they shall find the gates of heaven shut against them, for those gates are peculiarly the gates of righteousness through which there shall by no means enter anything that defileth." (Spurgeon)

b. **This is the gate of the LORD:** Now we picture the singer actually passing through the open gate, declaring God's great works for **the righteous**.

2. (21-24) *The chief cornerstone.*

**I will praise You,
For You have answered me,
And have become my salvation.
The stone *which* the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the LORD's doing;
It *is* marvelous in our eyes.
This *is* the day the LORD has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.**

a. **I will praise You:** Having passed into the holy city, the singer openly praised God for the answer and the salvation previously mentioned in this psalm.

b. **The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone:** We don't know what personal experience the psalmist might have had that led to these words. Perhaps it was purely a prophetic statement, because it certainly *was* fulfilled in the work of Jesus.

i. "And these master-builders rejected David as an obscure, and treacherous, and rebellious person, fit to be not only laid aside and thrown away, but also to be crushed to pieces. And so their successors rejected Christ as an enemy to Moses, a friend to sinners, and a blasphemer against God, and therefore deserving death and damnation." (Poole)

ii. This is a strong and important statement in the New Testament understanding of the person and work of Jesus. Jesus quoted this of Himself in Mat 21:42, Mar 12:10-11, and Luk 20:17. Peter

quoted it in reference to Jesus in Act 4:11. Paul alluded to this verse in Eph 2:20, and Peter also referred to it in 1Pe 2:7-8. No text in the Old Testament is quoted more in the New Testament.

iii. Boice noted something interesting about Peter's quotation of Psalms 118 in Act 4:11 : "In quoting from the Septuagint at this point Luke varied the quotation slightly, adding the word 'you.' The Septuagint says, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.' Luke changes it to say, 'The stone *you* builders rejected' (italics added), undoubtedly because that is what Peter said. Peter used the text to reinforce what he had been teaching about the guilt of Israel's leaders."

c. The stone which the builders rejected: It was true of Jacob, Joseph and David – each were rejected and then raised high. It was most certainly true of Jesus.

- They didn't approve of His origin (Joh 7:52).
- They didn't approve of His lack of formal education (Joh 7:15).
- They didn't approve of His disregard for religious traditions (Luk 6:2).
- They didn't approve of His choice of friends (Mat 9:11).

i. "Still do the builders refuse him: even to this day the professional teachers of the gospel are far too apt to fly to any and every new philosophy sooner than maintain the simple gospel, which is the essence of Christ: nevertheless, he holds his true position amongst his people, and the foolish builders shall see to their utter confusion that his truth shall be exalted over all." (Spurgeon)

d. **Has become the chief cornerstone:** This was also most certainly true. Fulfilled in Jesus, we see that even though the religious leaders (**the builders**) of His day **rejected** Him, God established Jesus as the **chief cornerstone** of His great plan of the ages, that all things would be founded and fulfilled in Him.

i. **Chief cornerstone:** "The 'capstone' was an important stone that held two rows of stones together in a corner ('cornerstone') or stabilized the stones at the foundation or elsewhere (cf. Isa 28:16)."
(VanGemeren)

ii. "Now he is the bond of the building, holding Jew and Gentile in firm unity. This precious cornerstone binds God and man together in wondrous amity, for he is both in one. He joins earth and heaven together, for he participates in each. He joins time and eternity together, for he was a man of few years, and yet he is the Ancient of Days. Wondrous cornerstone!" (Spurgeon)

iii. Jesus was and will be exalted. "It would be far better for Jesus to be exalted by your praise of his great grace and mercy in saving you than to be exalted in his power as he judges you justly for your sin." (Boice)

iv. It is hard to imagine Jesus singing this the night before His great rejection, leading to His suffering and crucifixion, *without* tears in His eyes. He would be **rejected**, and He would **become the chief cornerstone**.

v. "That these verses belong, in a full, proper sense, to Messiah, is confessed by the rabbis, and acknowledged by all." (Horne)

e. **This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes:** The psalmist spoke here on behalf of those redeemed by the Lord and whose life and future is built upon that **chief cornerstone**. *They* rejoice in God's **marvelous** work, despite the rejection of the builders.

i. **This is the LORD's doing:** The exaltation of Jesus from the cross to the resurrection to the right hand of God on high is the work of God *alone*. Who lifted Jesus high again, exalting Him above all?

- Not the religious leaders – they rejected Him.
- Not the Roman leaders – they crucified Him.
- Not the Jewish multitudes – they chose another.
- Not the disciples – they cowered in fear.
- Not His influential followers – they buried Him.
- Not the devoted women – they were beset by grief.
- *Only* God the Father Himself could lift Jesus high.

ii. "What can be more truly marvelous, that a person, put to death as a malefactor, and laid in the grave, should from thence arise immortal, and become the head of an immortal society; should ascend into heaven, be invested with power, and crowned with glory; and should prepare a way for the sons of Adam to follow him into those mansions of eternal bliss?" (Horne)

iii. "What astonishment will then take hold upon those who refused his righteous claims. Then will they know that this is the Lord's doing; though it will be terrible in their eyes. All intelligent beings, even down to the blackest devil of hell, shall at the second advent of our Lord be obliged to confess that the stone which the builders refused hath become the head stone of the corner." (Spurgeon)

f. **This is the day that the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it:** When Jesus quoted verse 22 (at Mat 21:42, Mar 12:10-11, and Luk 20:17), He did so in response to the praise and hosannas given to Him at what is commonly called the triumphal entry. Since this psalm is prophetically connected with that event, **the day** mentioned here can be prophetically understood as the day Jesus formally entered Jerusalem as Messiah and King.

i. It is true in a *general* sense that the LORD makes every day, and there is reason to **rejoice and be glad** in every day. Yet specifically, the **day** the LORD made to rejoice and be glad in was the day Jesus entered Jerusalem with hosannas welcoming Him as Israel's Savior. If on that day human voices failed to **rejoice and be glad**, Jesus said that the very stones would cry out their praises and hosannas (Luk 19:40).

ii. There is also reason to believe, based on the chronology of Sir Robert Anderson, that the particular day of the triumphal entry was prophesied in Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (Dan 9:24-26). Anderson's chronology is controversial and rejected by some, but as John Walvoord noted, "No one today is able dogmatically to declare that Sir Robert Anderson's computations are impossible."

3. (25-29) *The sacrifice bound to the altar.*

**Save now, I pray, O LORD;
O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.
God is the LORD,
And He has given us light;
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.**

**You are my God, and I will praise You;
You are my God, I will exalt You.**

a. **Save now, I pray, O LORD:** The context of the open gates (verse 19) and the coming into the city, as well as the arrangement of this psalm give the sense that these are words from different speakers or parts of a chorus.

i. **Save:** "With the Hebrews salvation is a wide word, comprising all the favours of God that may lead to preservation." (Hall, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD:** The main point of this ceremony of song is to welcome God's deliverer through the open gates into the holy city. This deliverer received a blessing from the singers as he approached the **house of the LORD**.

i. Mat 21:9 (along with Mar 11:9 and Joh 12:13) quote this phrase as spoken by those who welcomed Jesus at His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, when He formally presented Himself to Israel as their Messiah and King. The words **save now** are in Hebrew *hosanna*, which is exactly what the crowd at the triumphal entry cried out.

ii. We have a strange prediction that was fulfilled precisely. This deliverer was to be welcomed with open gates (verse 19), hosannas (verse 25), and blessings (verse 26). Yet He is and was the same chief cornerstone that would be rejected (verse 22). Exactly according to the words and spirit of this psalm, Jesus was welcomed as deliverer and Messiah on Palm Sunday, and rejected and crucified only a few days later.

iii. **We have blessed you from the house of the LORD:** "We can glimpse two companies at this point: one already in the temple court, greeting another

which is arriving with the king. *Blessed be he who enters* is an individual welcome, but *We bless you* is addressed to the many who are with him." (Kidner)

iv. **We have blessed you from the house of the LORD:** "Thus say the priests to the people. Ministers must bless those that bless Christ, saying, 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,' Eph 6:24." (Trapp)

c. **God is the LORD:** There is a brief but important focus on Yahweh as the true God, above all idols.

d. **Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar:** In view of the greatness of Yahweh and the light He gives, the sacrifice is willingly given. This was fulfilled in a way that the psalmist likely never expected – that the deliverer of the previous verses would *Himself* be the sacrifice, **bound** to an **altar**.

i. It is remarkable to consider and understand that *Jesus sang these words with His disciples a few hours before His crucifixion*. He invited God the Father to **bind** Him to the cross in making a holy sacrifice for sins at God's appointed **altar**. "How significant that before the final note of praise these words should occur!" (Morgan)

ii. Heb 13:10 makes reference to the sacrifice of Jesus at an **altar**, probably speaking of the cross.

iii. As we follow Jesus our forerunner, we also **bind** ourselves **with cords to the horns of the altar** of living sacrifice to Jesus (Rom 12:1-2). "It is well to be bound. Wilt Thou bind us, most blessed Spirit, and enamor us with the Cross, and let us never leave it? Bind us with the scarlet cord of redemption, and the golden cord of love, and the silver cord of Advent-hope." (Meyer)

iv. "How precious are the last lines that David Livingstone penned in his diary, before his boys found him kneeling beside his bed, dead, though in the attitude of prayer, the candle burning beside him: 'My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All; to Thee I again dedicate myself.' So bind each of us with the cords of love, and the bands of a man." (Meyer)

e. **You are my God, and I will praise You:** We take these words to be in the mouth of the deliverer who arrived through the open gates. He rightly surrendered Himself to God, filled with praise in view of the ultimate triumph. The voice of Jesus singing this praise and exaltation of God echoed through the upper room as evidence of His submission and obedience.

4. (29) *Ending with praise.*

**Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!*
For His mercy endures forever.**

a. **Oh, give thanks to the LORD:** This psalm began with exuberant and heartfelt praise, and it ends with the same – recognizing once again the goodness of God at the end of it all. If we start with praise, we are in a much better position to end with praise, despite all we go through.

b. **For His mercy endures forever:** Jesus Himself believed in and received this unending mercy and proclaimed it in song with His disciples in the upper room. The same **mercy**, that loyal love, covenant love, and lovingkindness that never ended for Him, is also given to His people.

i. "What better close could there be to this right royal song? The Psalmist would have risen to something higher, so as to end with the climax, but nothing loftier remained. He had reached the height of his

grandest argument, and there he paused."
(Spurgeon)

Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet

Psa 119:1 Happy are those whose lives are faultless, who live according to the law of the LORD.

Psa 119:2 Happy are those who follow his commands, who obey him with all their heart.

Psa 119:3 They never do wrong; they walk in the LORD's ways.

Psa 119:4 LORD, you have given us your laws and told us to obey them faithfully.

Psa 119:5 How I hope that I shall be faithful in keeping your instructions!

Psa 119:6 If I pay attention to all your commands, then I will not be put to shame.

Psa 119:7 As I learn your righteous judgments, I will praise you with a pure heart.

Psa 119:8 I will obey your laws; never abandon me!

Psa 119:9 How can young people keep their lives pure? By obeying your commands.

Psa 119:10 With all my heart I try to serve you; keep me from disobeying your commandments.

Psa 119:11 I keep your law in my heart, so that I will not sin against you.

Psa 119:12 I praise you, O LORD; teach me your ways.

Psa 119:13 I will repeat aloud all the laws you have given.

Psa 119:14 I delight in following your commands more than in having great wealth.

Psa 119:15 I study your instructions; I examine your teachings.

Psa 119:16 I take pleasure in your laws; your commands I will not forget.

Psa 119:17 Be good to me, your servant, so that I may live and obey your teachings.

Psa 119:18 Open my eyes, so that I may see the wonderful truths in your law.

Psa 119:19 I am here on earth for just a little while; do not hide your commands from me.

Psa 119:20 My heart aches with longing; I want to know your judgments at all times.

Psa 119:21 You reprimand the proud; cursed are those who disobey your commands.

Psa 119:22 Free me from their insults and scorn, because I have kept your laws.

Psa 119:23 The rulers meet and plot against me, but I will study your teachings.

Psa 119:24 Your instructions give me pleasure; they are my advisers.

Psa 119:25 I lie defeated in the dust; revive me, as you have promised.

Psa 119:26 I confessed all I have done, and you answered me; teach me your ways.

Psa 119:27 Help me to understand your laws, and I will meditate on your wonderful teachings.

Psa 119:28 I am overcome by sorrow; strengthen me, as you have promised.

Psa 119:29 Keep me from going the wrong way, and in your goodness teach me your law.

Psa 119:30 I have chosen to be obedient; I have paid attention to your judgments.

Psa 119:31 I have followed your instructions, LORD; don't let me be put to shame.

Psa 119:32 I will eagerly obey your commands, because you will give me more understanding.

Psa 119:33 Teach me, LORD, the meaning of your laws, and I will obey them at all times.

Psa 119:34 Explain your law to me, and I will obey it; I will keep it with all my heart.

Psa 119:35 Keep me obedient to your commandments, because in them I find happiness.

Psa 119:36 Give me the desire to obey your laws rather than to get rich.

Psa 119:37 Keep me from paying attention to what is worthless; be good to me, as you have promised.

Psa 119:38 Keep your promise to me, your servant—the promise you make to those who obey you.

Psa 119:39 Save me from the insults I fear; how wonderful are your judgments!

Psa 119:40 I want to obey your commands; give me new life, for you are righteous.

Psa 119:41 Show me how much you love me, LORD, and save me according to your promise.

Psa 119:42 Then I can answer those who insult me because I trust in your word.

Psa 119:43 Enable me to speak the truth at all times, because my hope is in your judgments.

Psa 119:44 I will always obey your law, forever and ever.

Psa 119:45 I will live in perfect freedom, because I try to obey your teachings.

Psa 119:46 I will announce your commands to kings and I will not be ashamed.

Psa 119:47 I find pleasure in obeying your commands, because I love them.

Psa 119:48 I respect and love your commandments; I will meditate on your instructions.

Psa 119:49 Remember your promise to me, your servant; it has given me hope.

Psa 119:50 Even in my suffering I was comforted because your promise gave me life.

Psa 119:51 The proud are always scornful of me, but I have not departed from your law.

Psa 119:52 I remember your judgments of long ago, and they bring me comfort, O LORD.

Psa 119:53 When I see the wicked breaking your law, I am filled with anger.

Psa 119:54 During my brief earthly life I compose songs about your commands.

Psa 119:55 In the night I remember you, LORD, and I think about your law.

Psa 119:56 I find my happiness in obeying your commands.

Psa 119:57 You are all I want, O LORD; I promise to obey your laws.

Psa 119:58 I ask you with all my heart to have mercy on me, as you have promised!

Psa 119:59 I have considered my conduct, and I promise to follow your instructions.

Psa 119:60 Without delay I hurry to obey your commands.

Psa 119:61 The wicked have laid a trap for me, but I do not forget your law.

Psa 119:62 In the middle of the night I wake up to praise you for your righteous judgments.

Psa 119:63 I am a friend of all who serve you, of all who obey your laws.

Psa 119:64 LORD, the earth is full of your constant love; teach me your commandments.

Psa 119:65 You have kept your promise, LORD, and you are good to me, your servant.

Psa 119:66 Give me wisdom and knowledge, because I trust in your commands.

Psa 119:67 Before you punished me, I used to go wrong, but now I obey your word.

Psa 119:68 How good you are—how kind! Teach me your commands.

Psa 119:69 The proud have told lies about me, but with all my heart I obey your instructions.

Psa 119:70 They have no understanding, but I find pleasure in your law.

Psa 119:71 My punishment was good for me, because it made me learn your commands.

Psa 119:72 The law that you gave means more to me than all the money in the world.

Psa 119:73 You created me, and you keep me safe; give me understanding, so that I may learn your laws.

Psa 119:74 Those who honor you will be glad when they see me, because I trust in your promise.

Psa 119:75 I know that your judgments are righteous, LORD, and that you punished me because you are faithful.

Psa 119:76 Let your constant love comfort me, as you have promised me, your servant.

Psa 119:77 Have mercy on me, and I will live because I take pleasure in your law.

Psa 119:78 May the proud be ashamed for falsely accusing me; as for me, I will meditate on your instructions.

Psa 119:79 May those who honor you come to me—all those who know your commands.

Psa 119:80 May I perfectly obey your commandments and be spared the shame of defeat.

Psa 119:81 I am worn out, LORD, waiting for you to save me; I place my trust in your word.

Psa 119:82 My eyes are tired from watching for what you promised, while I ask, "When will you help me?"

Psa 119:83 I am as useless as a discarded wineskin; yet I have not forgotten your commands.

Psa 119:84 How much longer must I wait? When will you punish those who persecute me?

Psa 119:85 The proud, who do not obey your law, have dug pits to trap me.

Psa 119:86 Your commandments are all trustworthy; people persecute me with lies—help me!

Psa 119:87 They have almost succeeded in killing me, but I have not neglected your commands.

Psa 119:88 Because of your constant love be good to me, so that I may obey your laws.

Psa 119:89 Your word, O LORD, will last forever; it is eternal in heaven.

Psa 119:90 Your faithfulness endures through all the ages; you have set the earth in place, and it remains.

Psa 119:91 All things remain to this day because of your command, because they are all your servants.

Psa 119:92 If your law had not been the source of my joy, I would have died from my sufferings.

Psa 119:93 I will never neglect your instructions, because by them you have kept me alive.

Psa 119:94 I am yours—save me! I have tried to obey your commands.

Psa 119:95 The wicked are waiting to kill me, but I will meditate on your laws.

Psa 119:96 I have learned that everything has limits; but your commandment is perfect.

Psa 119:97 How I love your law! I think about it all day long.

Psa 119:98 Your commandment is with me all the time and makes me wiser than my enemies.

Psa 119:99 I understand more than all my teachers, because I meditate on your instructions.

Psa 119:100 I have greater wisdom than those who are old, because I obey your commands.

Psa 119:101 I have avoided all evil conduct, because I want to obey your word.

Psa 119:102 I have not neglected your instructions, because you yourself are my teacher.

Psa 119:103 How sweet is the taste of your instructions—sweeter even than honey!

Psa 119:104 I gain wisdom from your laws, and so I hate all bad conduct.

Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.

Psa 119:106 I will keep my solemn promise to obey your just instructions.

Psa 119:107 My sufferings, LORD, are terrible indeed; keep me alive, as you have promised.

Psa 119:108 Accept my prayer of thanks, O LORD, and teach me your commands.

Psa 119:109 I am always ready to risk my life; I have not forgotten your law.

Psa 119:110 The wicked lay a trap for me, but I have not disobeyed your commands.

Psa 119:111 Your commandments are my eternal possession; they are the joy of my heart.

Psa 119:112 I have decided to obey your laws until the day I die.

Psa 119:113 I hate those who are not completely loyal to you, but I love your law.

Psa 119:114 You are my defender and protector; I put my hope in your promise.

Psa 119:115 Go away from me, you sinful people. I will obey the commands of my God.

Psa 119:116 Give me strength, as you promised, and I shall live; don't let me be disappointed in my hope!

Psa 119:117 Hold me, and I will be safe, and I will always pay attention to your commands.

Psa 119:118 You reject everyone who disobeys your laws; their deceitful schemes are useless.

Psa 119:119 You treat all the wicked like rubbish, and so I love your instructions.

Psa 119:120 Because of you I am afraid; I am filled with fear because of your judgments.

Psa 119:121 I have done what is right and good; don't abandon me to my enemies!

Psa 119:122 Promise that you will help your servant; don't let the arrogant oppress me!

Psa 119:123 My eyes are tired from watching for your saving help, for the deliverance you promised.

Psa 119:124 Treat me according to your constant love, and teach me your commands.

Psa 119:125 I am your servant; give me understanding, so that I may know your teachings.

Psa 119:126 LORD, it is time for you to act, because people are disobeying your law.

Psa 119:127 I love your commands more than gold, more than the finest gold.

Psa 119:128 And so I follow all your instructions; I hate all wrong ways.

Psa 119:129 Your teachings are wonderful; I obey them with all my heart.

Psa 119:130 The explanation of your teachings gives light and brings wisdom to the ignorant.

Psa 119:131 In my desire for your commands I pant with open mouth.

Psa 119:132 Turn to me and have mercy on me as you do on all those who love you.

Psa 119:133 As you have promised, keep me from falling; don't let me be overcome by evil.

Psa 119:134 Save me from those who oppress me, so that I may obey your commands.

Psa 119:135 Bless me with your presence and teach me your laws.

Psa 119:136 My tears pour down like a river, because people do not obey your law.

Psa 119:137 You are righteous, LORD, and your laws are just.

Psa 119:138 The rules that you have given are completely fair and right.

Psa 119:139 My anger burns in me like a fire, because my enemies disregard your commands.

Psa 119:140 How certain your promise is! How I love it!

Psa 119:141 I am unimportant and despised, but I do not neglect your teachings.

Psa 119:142 Your righteousness will last forever, and your law is always true.

Psa 119:143 I am filled with trouble and anxiety, but your commandments bring me joy.

Psa 119:144 Your instructions are always just; give me understanding, and I shall live.

Psa 119:145 With all my heart I call to you; answer me, LORD, and I will obey your commands!

Psa 119:146 I call to you; save me, and I will keep your laws.

Psa 119:147 Before sunrise I call to you for help; I place my hope in your promise.

Psa 119:148 All night long I lie awake, to meditate on your instructions.

Psa 119:149 Because your love is constant, hear me, O LORD; show your mercy, and preserve my life!

Psa 119:150 My cruel persecutors are coming closer, people who never keep your law.

Psa 119:151 But you are near to me, LORD, and all your commands are permanent.

Psa 119:152 Long ago I learned about your instructions; you made them to last forever.

Psa 119:153 Look at my suffering, and save me, because I have not neglected your law.

Psa 119:154 Defend my cause, and set me free; save me, as you have promised.

Psa 119:155 The wicked will not be saved, for they do not obey your laws.

Psa 119:156 But your compassion, LORD, is great; show your mercy and save me!

Psa 119:157 I have many enemies and oppressors, but I do not fail to obey your laws.

Psa 119:158 When I look at those traitors, I am filled with disgust, because they do not keep your commands.

Psa 119:159 See how I love your instructions, LORD. Your love never changes, so save me!

Psa 119:160 The heart of your law is truth, and all your righteous judgments are eternal.

Psa 119:161 Powerful people attack me unjustly, but I respect your law.

Psa 119:162 How happy I am because of your promises—as happy as someone who finds rich treasure.

Psa 119:163 I hate and detest all lies, but I love your law.

Psa 119:164 Seven times each day I thank you for your righteous judgments.

Psa 119:165 Those who love your law have perfect security, and there is nothing that can make them fall.

Psa 119:166 I wait for you to save me, LORD, and I do what you command.

Psa 119:167 I obey your teachings; I love them with all my heart.

Psa 119:168 I obey your commands and your instructions; you see everything I do.

Psa 119:169 Let my cry for help reach you, LORD! Give me understanding, as you have promised.

Psa 119:170 Listen to my prayer, and save me according to your promise!

Psa 119:171 I will always praise you, because you teach me your laws.

Psa 119:172 I will sing about your law, because your commands are just.

Psa 119:173 Always be ready to help me, because I follow your commands.

Psa 119:174 How I long for your saving help, O LORD! I find happiness in your law.

Psa 119:175 Give me life, so that I may praise you; may your instructions help me.

Psa 119:176 I wander about like a lost sheep; so come and look for me, your servant, because I have not neglected your laws.

Psalms 119:1-176

Psalms 119 – The Greatness and Glory of God’s Word

This long psalm deserves a long introduction. The author is unnamed; older commentators almost universally said it is a psalm of David, composed throughout his entire life. More modern commentators sometimes conclude that it is post-exilic, coming from the days of Nehemiah or Ezra. It may be

that David was the author, but we can't say this with certainty, and it is not necessary to know; if it were important, God would have preserved the name of David to this psalm. No matter who the author was, it was likely written over some period of time and later compiled, because there is not a definite flow of thought from the beginning of the psalm to the end. The sections and verses are not like a chain, where one link is connected to the other, but like a string of pearls where each pearl has equal, but independent value.

Psalms 119 is arranged in an acrostic pattern. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and this psalm contains 22 units of 8 verses each. Each of the 22 sections is given a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each line in that section begins with that letter. The closest parallel to this pattern in Scripture is found in Lamentations 3, which is also divided into 22 sections, and a few other passages in the Hebrew Scriptures use an acrostic pattern.

Since this is a psalm glorifying God and His word, it refers to Scripture over and over again. Psalms 119 is remarkable for how often it refers to God's written revelation, His word. It is referred to in almost every verse. The Masoretes (a group of Jewish scholars between the 6th and 10th centuries AD) said that the word of God is mentioned in every verse except Psa 119:122. Other people analyze this differently (with disagreement about verses 84, 90, 121, and 132). But Scripture is mentioned in at least 171 of the 176 verses.

In this psalm there are eight basic words used to describe the Scriptures, God's written revelation to us:

- **Law** (*torah*, used 25 times in Psalms 119): "Its parent verb means 'teach' or 'direct'; therefore coming from God it means both 'law' and 'revelation.' It can be used of a single command or of a whole body of law." (Derek Kidner)
- **Word** (*dabar*, used 24 times): The idea is of the spoken word, God's revealed word to man. "Proceeding from his mouth and revealed by him to us..." (Matthew Poole)
- **Judgments** (*mispatim*, used 23 times): "...from *shaphat*, to *judge*, *determine*, *regulate*, *order*, and *discern*, because they *judge* concerning our words and works; show the *rules* by which they should be *regulated*; and cause us to *discern* what is *right* and *wrong*, and *decide* accordingly." (Adam Clarke)
- **Testimonies** (*edut/edot*, used 23 times): This word is related to the word for *witness*. To obey His **testimonies** "...signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant made between the Lord and Israel." (Willem VanGemeren)
- **Commandments** (*miswah/miswot*, used 22 times): "This word emphasizes the straight authority of what is said...the right to give orders." (Derek Kidner)
- **Statutes** (*huqqim*, used 21 times): The noun is derived from the root verb "engrave" or "inscribe"; the idea is the written word of God and the authority of His written word: "...declaring his authority and power of giving us laws." (Matthew Poole)
- **Precepts** (*piqqudim*, used 21 times): "This is a word drawn from the sphere of an officer or overseer, a man who is responsible to look closely into a situation and take action.... So the word points to the particular instructions of the Lord, as of one who cares about detail." (Derek Kidner)
- **Word** (*imrah*, used 19 times): *Imrah* is similar in meaning to *dabar*, yet a different term. "The 'word' may

denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised." (Willem VanGemenen)

The theme of the glory of Scripture is diligently explored in this psalm, but always in connection with God Himself. Derek Kidner remarks: "This untiring emphasis has led some to accuse the psalmist of worshipping the Word rather than the Lord; but it has been well remarked that every reference here to Scripture, without exception, relates it explicitly to its Author; indeed, every verse from 4 to the end is a prayer for affirmation addressed to Him. This is true piety: a love of God not desiccated by study but refreshed, informed and nourished by it."

" This wonderful psalm, from its great length, helps us to wonder at the immensity of Scripture. From its keeping to one subject it helps us to adore the unity of Scripture; for it is but one. Yet, from the many turns it gives to the same thought, it helps you to see the variety of Scripture.... Some have said that in it there is an absence of variety, but that is merely the observation of those who have not studied it. I have weighed each word, and looked at each syllable with lengthened meditation; and I bear witness that this sacred song has no tautology in it, but is charmingly varied from beginning to end. Its variety is that of a kaleidoscope: from a few objects a boundless variation is produced. In the kaleidoscope you look once, and there is a strangely beautiful form. You shift the glass a very little, and another shape, equally delicate and beautiful, is before your eyes. So it is here." (Charles Spurgeon)

Being such a long psalm – and the longest chapter in the Bible – this psalm has been of great historical interest. There have been many lengthy works written on this psalm; one of them is by Thomas Manton, a Puritan preacher and writer, who wrote a three-volume work on Psalms 119. Each volume is between 500 and 600 pages, with a total of

1,677 pages. There are 190 chapters in his work, more than one chapter for each verse.

"Luther professed that he prized this Psalm so highly, that he would not take the whole world in exchange for one leaf of it." (Charles Bridges) Some great people have memorized this whole psalm and found great blessing in doing so: John Ruskin (19th century British writer), William Wilberforce (19th century British politician who led the movement to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire), Henry Martyn (19th century pioneer missionary to India), and David Livingstone (19th century pioneer missionary to Africa).

Matthew Henry – the great 18th century Bible commentator – was introduced to Psalms 119 as a child. His father, Philip Henry, told his children to take one verse of Psalms 119 every morning to meditate on, and thereby go through the entire psalm twice in the year. Philip said to his children, "That will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures." Perhaps that practice was why Matthew Henry loved the Bible so much that he wrote commentary that is used still today.

George Wishart was the Bishop of Edinburgh in the 17th century (not to be confused with another Scot by the same name who was martyred a century earlier). Wishart was condemned to death for his faith. But when he was on the scaffold, he made use of a custom that allowed the condemned person to choose one psalm to be sung, and he chose Psalms 119. Before two-thirds of the psalm had been sung, his pardon arrived and his life was spared.

A. Aleph ? : The blessedness of those who walk in God's word and the longing to do so.

1. (1-2) Blessing declared.

**Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD!
Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!**

a. **Blessed are the undefiled in the way:** In beginning to describe man's blessedness, the psalmist starts with the idea that being **undefiled in the way** is a blessing.

i. Many people – ancient and modern – think the life lived **undefiled in the way** is *boring* at best. The idea is that if there isn't any defilement in it, then it can't be any fun. Yet the one who walks in God's word knows the true blessedness of living and enjoying an undefiled life.

ii. We can simply say that God is blessed; He wants us to share His blessedness. His word shows us the way to share His blessedness, and it is found by being **undefiled in the way**.

iii. Survey and polling data constantly demonstrate that those who live lives in general conformity to God's standards are happier, enjoy life more, and are more content. Yet the illusion remains for many that a *defiled* life is more "fun."

iv. We need God to show us the way to a happy life, and it is centered on being **undefiled in the way**. "The reason we are not happy is that we sin, and the main reason we sin as much as we do is that we do not know the Bible well enough.... Apart from being instructed by God, human beings do not know how to achieve happiness." (Boice)

b. **Who walk in the law of the LORD:** In the mind of the psalmist, there is a strong and definite connection between being **undefiled in the way** and walking **in the**

law of the LORD. To **walk in the law of the LORD** is in fact to be **undefiled in the way**.

i. We wouldn't *know* what a pure life was without God telling us. Certainly, some aspects of a pure life are revealed in human conscience and known widely among humanity. Yet there are other aspects of the pure life that we learn only from the word of God.

ii. **The law of the LORD:** Here the author of Psalms 119 uses, for the first time, a phrase referring to the written revelation of God. The many various ways he referred to God's written revelation shows us how much he knew, loved, and respected God's word.

iii. **The law of the LORD:** The word here used is *torah*. "Here the great word *Torah* is used, the word which to the Hebrew stood for the Law, being the word employed to describe the first division of the Bible, that which we call the Pentateuch." (Morgan)

iv. "To enjoy this beatitude a holy walking must become habitual. This sacred exercise is very different from sluggish piety. 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord.' A man may sit down in the road without soiling his skin or fouling his apparel, but that is not enough. There must be progress – practical action – in the Christian life; and in order to experience blessedness we must be doing something for the Master." (Spurgeon)

c. **Blessed are those who keep His testimonies:** To **keep His testimonies** is virtually the same as to **walk in the law of the LORD**. Here is an example of the parallelism common to Hebrew poetry, used for both explanation and emphasis.

i. **Keep** means *doing*, not only *hearing*. "Neither is it enough that we understand or ponder God's precepts,

but we must practise them, if we would be happy.” (Trapp)

ii. “Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in the practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it. In order to keep it well we must get a firm grip of it: we cannot keep in the heart that which we have not heartily embraced by the affections.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “But let me not shrink from the question, do I ‘*keep his testimonies*’ from constraint, or from love? Surely when I consider my own natural aversion and enmity to the law of God, and the danger of self-deception in the external service of the Lord, I have much need to pray.” (Bridges)

d. **Who seek Him with the whole heart:** If one will **seek** God **with the whole heart**, it *must* include diligent study of God’s written revelation. There are good and important ways to seek God other than through His word (such as in prayer, worship, fasting, serving, and so forth). Yet if these do not include seeking God in and through His word, these other practices can be misdirected.

i. **With the whole heart:** Yet, we do not miss the emphasis on the **heart**. “God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavour to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The **whole heart** is vital. God is one; and we will not know Him closely until we seek Him with the **whole heart**. This is a challenge to the *divided* heart, not to the *broken* heart. "Strange to say, in scriptural phraseology, a heart...may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole." (Spurgeon)

2. (3) *Blessing described.*

**They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.**

a. **They also do no iniquity:** The idea from verses 1-2 is repeated; these ones *keep His testimonies*, they are *undefiled in the way*, and **they also do no iniquity**. There is a purity and goodness that marks their lives.

b. **They walk in His ways:** They have *learned His ways* from the written revelation; but with His word, God also gives grace and power to **walk in His ways**.

3. (4-8) *Blessing desired.*

**You have commanded us
To keep Your precepts diligently.
Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!
Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.
I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!**

a. **You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently:** The psalmist connects **commanded** *obedience* with the blessings to the obedient. He shows that the reason God **commanded**

us to keep His precepts diligently is not only because it honors Him, but also because it is the path to blessing.

i. With the words “**You have commanded us,**” we see that the psalmist begins to address God in prayer; a position he will hold through most of the psalm. This shows that he was not only a student of Scripture, but also a man of prayer.

ii. “Because it was a hard thing to rightly understand this word in all its parts, and harder to put it in practice, he therefore intermixed many prayers to God for his help therein, thereby directing and encouraging others to take the same course.” (Poole)

iii. **To keep Your precepts:** “God has not commanded us to be diligent in *making* precepts, but in *keeping* them. Some bind yokes upon their own necks, and make bonds and rules for others: but the wise course is to be satisfied with the rules of holy Scripture.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes:** This is not only a pious wish; it is also a prayer for the ability to obey God’s word. Apart from His work in us, we lack the ability to keep those commands.

i. Here the psalmist gets *personal*. This isn’t a theological treatise on written revelation; it is an interaction with the Living God regarding His primary way of showing Himself to us. “It may be considered as the journal of one, who was deeply taught in the things of God, long practiced in the life and walk of faith.” (Bridges)

ii. “We do not get very far into the psalm before we discover that he is very much like ourselves, at least in the respect that he has not yet gotten to be like

the happy, blessed ones he is describing. He wants to be, but he is not yet." (Boice)

iii. "Without thee I can do nothing; my soul is *unstable* and *fickle*; and it will continue *weak* and *uncertain* till thou *strengthen* and establish it." (Clarke)

c. **Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments:** The psalmist felt the shame that comes when the standard of God's word is compared to our lives. He prayed for the power to live an unashamed life.

i. "'Shame' is the fruit of sin; confidence is the effect of righteousness." (Horne)

ii. "There is a twofold shame; the shame of a guilty conscience; and the shame of a tender conscience. The one is the merit and fruit of sin; the other is an act of grace." (Thomas Manton, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "...unto all thy commandments; so as not to be partial in my obedience, not to allow myself in the practice of any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty." (Poole)

iv. "Sincerity therefore must be the stamp of my Christian profession. Though utterly unable to render perfect obedience to the least of the commandments, yet my desire and purpose will *have respect unto them all*." (Bridges)

d. **I will praise You with uprightness of heart:** The psalmist found it not only important to **praise** God, but to do it with **uprightness of heart**. He did not want to offer God the *image* of praise or a *moment* of praise when the rest of his life was not upright.

i. "Be sure that he who prays for holiness will one day praise for happiness. Shame having vanished, silence

is broken, and the formerly silent man declares, 'I will praise thee.'" (Spurgeon)

e. **I will keep Your statutes:** This was a promise to **keep** – in the sense of *guarding* – the **statutes** (*huqqim*), the engraved, inscribed, written word of God.

i. We never forget that in a real sense, only Jesus could say **I will keep Your statutes**. "The many strong expressions of love toward the law, and the repeated resolutions and vows to observe it, will often force us to turn our thoughts to the true David, whose 'meat and drink it was, to do the will of him that sent him.'" (Horne)

f. **Oh, do not forsake me utterly:** We sense the note of *desperation* in the psalmist. He knows and loves God's word, yet is also very conscious of his inability – apart from the work of God in his life – to *live* God's word. If God did **forsake** him, he would be lost.

i. "*Forsaken* we may be – but not *utterly*. David was *forsaken*, not like Saul. Peter was *forsaken*, not like Judas, *utterly* and for ever.... Mark his dealings with you. Inquire into their reason. Submit to his dispensation. If he *forsakes*, beg his return: but trust your *forsaking* God." (Bridges)

ii. The heart that sings **do not forsake me utterly** is a heart that longs to be close to God. "Apparently unconsciously, that is without intention, the song reveals the fact that a man who obeys the will of God as revealed, comes to a personal fellowship with God. From beginning to end, the singer sang as one who had personal knowledge of God and direct dealing with Him." (Morgan)

B. Beth ?: Purity of life and meditation on God's word.

Each line of this second section of Psalms 119 begins with the Hebrew letter Beth, which also means "a house." Some have suggested that this section tells us how to make our heart a home for the word of God.

1. (9) A young man finds a cleansed life through God's word.

How can a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed according to Your word.

a. **How can a young man cleanse his way?** This was no less a difficult question in ancient times than in our own. The **young man** has his own particular challenges in living a pure life.

i. This is a question that some – even some who are numbered among the people of God – never seem to ask for themselves. Sadly, some people never have a concern for moral purity. They echo the prayer of Augustine before his conversion: "Lord, make me chaste – but not yet."

ii. The world tells us, "Have your good time when you are young; get it all out of your system. When you are older you can settle down and be religious and proper." Boice comments on this thinking: "God's answer is quite different. God says, If you are going to live for me, you must begin at the earliest possible moment, without delay, preferably when you are very young."

iii. Even when one has the desire for moral purity, there are many things that may make it difficult for a young man to **cleanse his way**.

- Youthful energy and a sense of carelessness.
- The lack of life wisdom.
- The desire for and gaining of independence.

- Physical and sexual maturity that may run ahead of spiritual and moral maturity.
- Money and the freedom that it brings.
- Young women who may – knowingly or unknowingly – encourage moral impurity.
- The spirit of the age that both expects and promotes moral uncleanness for young men.
- The desire to be accepted by peers who face the same challenges.

iv. “Why is the *young man* so especially called to *cleanse his way*? Because God justly claims the first and the best.” (Bridges)

v. God wants to spare the **young man** (and the older man) the bondage of sin. *Experience* has the power to shape our *habits*. Surrender to any temptation; transfer it from the realm of mental contemplation to life experience, and that temptation instantly becomes

much more difficult to resist in the future. Each successive experience of surrender to temptation builds a habit, reinforced not only spiritually, but also by brain chemistry. Such ingrained habits are more and more difficult to break the more they are experienced; and it is almost impossible to break such habits without *replacing* them with another habit.

vi. Significantly, the words **his way** come from the Hebrew word *orach*. “*Orach*, which we translate *way* here, signifies a *track*, a *rut*, such as is made by the wheel of a cart or chariot.” (Clarke) A **young man** the tracks for the rest of his life.

vii. Of course, it is not *only* the **young man** who has these challenges; older men and women of every age

have their own challenges in living pure lives. Yet these are often more severely felt in the life of the **young man**.

viii. "From the heartfelt prayers of the surrounding verses it would seem that the *young man* is the psalmist himself in the first place. He is praying rather than preaching." (Kidner)

b. **By taking heed:** A life of moral purity does not happen accidentally. If one does not take **heed**, the natural path is toward impurity and degeneration. One must **take heed** in order to be pure.

c. **According to Your word:** This is *how* one takes heed. The foundation for a morally pure life is found in God's **word**.

- God's word shows us the standard of purity, so we know what is right and what is wrong.
- God's word shows us the reasons for purity, so we understand the wisdom and goodness of God's commands.
- God's word shows us the difficulty of purity, and reminds us to be on guard.
- God's word shows us the blessings of purity, and gives us an incentive to make the necessary sacrifices.
- God's word shows us how to be born again – converted, so our inner man may be transformed after the pattern of ultimate purity, Jesus Christ.
- God's word shows us the way to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, so that we have the spiritual resources to be pure.
- God's word is a refuge against temptation, giving us a way of escape in the season of enticement.

- God's word is a light that clears away the deceptive fog of seduction and temptation.
- God's word is a mirror that helps us see our spiritual and moral condition, and thus walk in purity.
- God's word gives us wise and simple commands, such as to "Flee youthful lusts" (2Ti 2:22).
- God's word washes us from impurity, and actually cleanses our life in a spiritual sense (Eph 5:26, Joh 15:3).
- God's word is the key to the renewing of our minds, which in turn is the key to personal, moral, and spiritual transformation (Rom 12:1-2).
- God's word gives a refuge against condemnation when we have been impure, and shows us how to repent and come back to a pure life.
- God's word shows us how to conduct our lives so that we are an encouragement to others in purity.
 - i. Jesus spoke specifically of the power of His word to cleanse and keep us pure: *You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you (Joh 15:3). Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (Joh 17:17).*
 - ii. The impact is clear: if you want to **cleanse** your **way**, then you must also **take heed according** to God's word.
 - iii. "Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most

accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it." (Spurgeon)

iv. This idea is communicated in Pro 2:10-12 : *When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things.*

v. We remind ourselves that Jesus answered temptation with the word of God (Mat 4:1-10). "He who became man for our salvation, passed through this state of youth, undefiled, that he might, as it were, reclaim and consecrate it anew to God." (Horne)

2. (10-11) *How one takes heed of God's word.*

**With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.**

a. **With my whole heart I have sought You:** Here the psalmist declares his dedication to God, and at the same time recognizes his weakness in being able to maintain such a dedication (**Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments**).

i. **With my whole heart I have sought You** reminds us that Scripture was no mere textbook to the psalmist; it was how he **sought** and met with God. "His heart had gone after God himself: he had not only desired to obey his laws, but to commune with his person." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Let me not wander** helps us put in perspective the many claims to purity and devotion in this psalm (and others). They are understood in the light of

dependence upon God, not in the sense of self-righteous pride.

iii. "The path of purity is that of caution conditioned by the Word of God. This caution is further manifested in the distrust of self, and earnest seeking to be kept in the way of God's commandments." (Morgan)

iv. "When the soul is thus conscious of 'following the Lord fully,' there is a peculiar *dread of wandering*. In a careless or half-hearted state, wanderings are not watched, so long as they do not lead to any open declension." (Bridges)

b. **Your word I have hidden in my heart:** The psalmist knew the value of taking God's word and *hiding* it in his heart. It is **hidden** in the sense that it is on the *inside*, where no one can see it, and it is *safe* so that no one can take it away.

i. We can be assured that before this word was **hidden in his heart**, it was received in his *mind*. The psalmist heard and read the word of God, and thought about it continually, until it became ingrained in both his mind and his heart.

ii. "Memorizing is precisely what is called for, since it is only when the Word of God is readily available in our minds that we are able to recall it in moments of need and profit by it." (Boice)

iii. "If God's word be only in his *Bible*, and not also in his *heart*, he may soon and easily be surprised into his *besetting* sin." (Clarke)

c. **That I might not sin against You:** Here the psalmist states one *benefit* from having God's word **hidden in his heart**. It is a defense against sin, for all the reasons discussed above and more.

i. "The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: 'With my whole heart have *I* sought thee.' Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was after holiness: 'That *I* might not sin against thee.'" (Spurgeon)

3. (12) *A prayer for instruction.*

Blessed are You, O LORD!

Teach me Your statutes.

a. **Blessed are You, O LORD:** The psalmist seems to interrupt his thoughts on the connection between God's word and a pure life with this expression of praise. The greatness of these ideas and the reality of them in his life has made this praise necessary.

b. **Teach me Your statutes:** This demonstrates the humility of the psalmist. Though filled with God's word and a desire for purity, he sensed his constant need for instruction by God. He didn't simply need to *read* God's **statutes**; he pleaded with God to **teach** him.

i. This saying is written in the front of some Bibles: "This book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book." The psalmist understood this principle, and longed for God to be his teacher, and to keep him in God's great book.

ii. "We need to be disciples or learners – '*teach me*;' but what an honour to have God himself for a teacher: how bold is [the psalmist] to beg the blessed God to teach him!" (Spurgeon)

4. (13-16) *A declaration of commitment.*

With my lips I have declared

All the judgments of Your mouth.

**I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As *much as* in all riches.**

**I will meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate Your ways.**

**I will delight myself in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.**

a. **With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth:** The psalmist understood the importance of not only silently reading or hearing the word of God, but also the importance in *saying* it. To declare God's word (**all the judgments of Your mouth**) with his **lips** was another part of his relationship with and love for God.

i. We may confidently conclude that there is not enough – never enough – of this among the people of God. God's people should have His word not only in their minds and hearts, but also upon their **lips**. *Saying it* is powerful and must not be neglected.

ii. "When we make the Scriptures the subject of our conversation, we glorify God, we edify our neighbours, and we improve ourselves." (Horne)

b. **I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches:** The psalmist understood the true value of God's word; it gave him as much joy as **all riches** might.

i. It could be fairly asked of every Christian: "For what amount would you deny yourself to ever hear or read God's word again?" It is to be feared that many, like Esau, would sell this birthright treasure for the equivalent of a bowl of stew.

ii. "We may also observe here an evidence of adoption. Obedience is not a burden, but a *delight*."

The servant may *perform* the statutes of God, but it is only the son who '*delights in them.*'" (Bridges)

c. **I will meditate...and contemplate...I will delight...I will not forget Your word:** The greatness of God's word has led the psalmist to great resolution for his life. His life will be filled with God's word, in his mind (**meditate...contemplate**), in his heart (**delight**), and in his habits (**not forget**).

i. "Meditation is recalling what we have committed to memory and then turning it over and over in our minds to see the fullest implications and applications of the truth." (Boice)

ii. **I will delight:** "The word is very emphatical: *evetva eshtaasha, I will skip about and jump for joy.*" (Clarke)

iii. This giving of the fullness of life to God's word – in mind, heart, and habits – is a good description of what the psalmist meant by *taking heed* in verse 9. The young man will *cleanse his way*, and enjoy the fullness of such a God-honoring life.

iv. We can almost hear a challenge from the psalmist: "You live your compromising, impure life that thinks it knows pleasure and satisfaction; I will cleanse my way and give the fullness of my life to God and His word, and we will see who will be more blessed, more happy, and more filled with life."

C. Gimel ? : The word of God and the trials of life.

1. (17) *A prayer for blessing, so that God's word can be kept.*

**Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.**

a. **Deal bountifully with Your servant:** This is a wonderful request: boldly asking for blessing (**deal bountifully**), while at the same time coming humbly before God (**Your servant**). The servant properly depends upon the master for his bounty.

i. In saying, **Deal bountifully**, the psalmist was asking for a lot, not just a little. "The believer, like [the psalmist], is a man of large expectations.... We may, indeed, be too bold in our manner of approach to God; but we cannot be too bold in our expectations from him." (Bridges)

ii. "He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed, 'O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **That I may live and keep Your word:** This is *why* the psalmist asked for God's blessing. It was not for personal indulgence or even comfort, but so that God's **word** might be *lived* and *kept*. This is a wonderful, God-honoring prayer that is heard in heaven.

i. As the rest of this section will demonstrate, the psalmist prayed this because of great problems and pressures that had beset him. This section of the psalm shows us that the author was a man who had suffered deeply. He had known persecution (verses 22-23), deprivation and fear for his life (verse 17), seasons when he seemed to get nothing from God's word (verse 18), and loneliness, rejection, and a sense of abandonment (verses 19-20).

ii. In the midst of these trials, he wanted to **live** – not only surviving, but also a better *quality* of life, especially in regard to God.

iii. **That I may live:** “[This] is the first of many such prayers.... While some of them could refer simply to surviving an illness or an attack, others are clearly qualitative, speaking of life that is worthy of the name, or in our terms, spiritual life, found in fellowship with God.” (Kidner)

2. (18) *A prayer for insight, so that God’s word can be understood.*

**Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.**

a. **Open my eyes, that I may see:** The psalmist recognized that without God’s enlightenment, he could not **see** what he could and should from God’s word.

i. “The verb ‘open’ in verse 18 is used in the Balaam story where the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes so he could see the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. It has to do with removing a veil, or covering.” (Boice)

ii. This reminds us that it isn’t the word of God that needs changing, as if it were obscure; we are the ones who are veiled and can’t understand the word of God apart from the work of the Spirit. Paul’s eyes were unveiled when he was converted (Act 9:18); it was as if scales had dropped from his eyes.

iii. “In order to *keep God’s word*, must we not pray to understand it? What then is this prayer? Not – give me a plainer Bible – but *open my eyes* to know my Bible. Not – show me some new revelations beside *the law* – but make me *behold the wonders of the law*.” (Bridges)

iv. The psalmist didn’t need new revelation; he needed to see the revelation that was already given.

He didn't need new eyes; he needed to see more clearly with the eyes he already had.

b. **Wondrous things from Your law:** There are **wondrous things** in Scripture; but they can only be seen when the eyes are opened by God. This means that *prayer* is an important (and often neglected) part of Bible study.

i. Not *everyone* sees the **wondrous things** in God's word, but when he *does* see them, he should regard it as evidence of God's blessing and favor.

ii. Jesus rejoiced that God revealed His wisdom this way: *At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes."* (Mat 11:25)

iii. God has given man a sense of wonder, and there are certain things that prompt it. The new and unexpected can cause wonder, the beautiful and great can cause wonder, and the mysterious and unknown can cause wonder. God has provided for this sense of wonder by giving us His word. The Holy Spirit can make us alive to the Bible, and helps us constantly see things that are new and unexpected, things that are great and beautiful, and things that are mysterious and unknown. It is a shame that many Christians look for their sense of wonder to be satisfied without looking to the word of God.

iv. Think of all there is in the Bible that *you don't see*. Think of all the wonder, all the treasure that is *there*, but you don't see it. You *can* see some things, though you can't see *everything*, and sometimes you will think you see things that are not really there. Those who see more than you are not necessarily smarter or better; their eyes are just more open.

v. "If we want to see wonderful things in the Scriptures, it is not enough for us merely to ask God to open our eyes that we might see them. We must also study the Bible carefully. The Holy Spirit is given not to make our study unnecessary but to make it effective." (Boice)

3. (19-20) *A prayer for revelation, longing for God's word.*

**I am a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from me.
My soul breaks with longing
For Your judgments at all times.**

a. **I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me:** This is the same request as in the previous verse, but made for a different reason. The psalmist wants to know and keep God's word, and prays for it to be so; but now he makes the request because he recognizes that the **earth** is not his home, and he needs communication with his true homeland.

i. When we think of the man who says **I am a stranger in the earth**, we should not think of the man who wanders alone through the wilderness. We should think of the man who lives among others and is surrounded by the vanity of the world's joys, but all the while knows, "I don't really belong here."

ii. "If you are trying to follow God, the world is going to treat you as an alien, for that is what you will be. You cannot expect to be at home in it, and if you are, well, it is an indication that you really do not belong to Christ or at least are living far from him." (Boice)

b. **My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times:** His **soul** longed for God's word so much because he was indeed **a stranger in the earth**; for

those who feel perfectly at home in this world, the word that comes to them from heaven is less precious.

i. **My soul breaks:** “We have a similar expression: *It broke my heart, That is heart-breaking, She died of a broken heart.* It expresses excessive longing, grievous disappointment, hopeless love, accumulated sorrow. By this we may see the *hungering* and *thirsting* which the psalmist had after righteousness, often mingled with much *despondency*.” (Clarke)

ii. “Spiritual desires are the shadows of coming blessings. What God intends to give us he first sets us longing for. Hence the wonderful efficacy of prayer, because prayer is the embodiment of a longing inspired of God because he intends to bestow the blessing. What are thy longings, then, my hearer?” (Spurgeon)

iii. “Longing lingers not within a lifeless corpse. Where the heart is breaking with desire there is life. This may comfort some of you: you have not attained as yet to the holiness you admire, but you long for it: ah, then, you are a living soul, the life of God is in you.” (Spurgeon)

4. (21-24) *A prayer for refuge in God’s word.*

**You rebuke the proud—the cursed,
Who stray from Your commandments.
Remove from me reproach and contempt,
For I have kept Your testimonies.
Princes also sit *and* speak against me,
But Your servant meditates on Your statutes.
Your testimonies also *are* my delight
And my counselors.**

a. **You rebuke the proud:** Those who **stray** from God’s **commandments** are both **proud** (their disobedience is

evidence of willfulness) and **cursed** (no good can come from their disobedience).

i. "Let the histories of Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod, exhibit *the proud under the rebuke and curse of God.*" (Bridges)

b. **Remove from me reproach and contempt:** The psalmist recognized that even **princes also sit and speak** against him; yet he would not turn from meditation on God's word. Instead, he simply prayed, asking God to deal with the **reproach and contempt** that notable people put on him for his love of God's word.

i. **Reproach** is unpleasant; it is the expression of disapproval or disappointment. Yet **contempt** is even worse; it is the feeling that a person or thing is beneath consideration, that he is worthless and useless.

ii. Beyond **reproach** and **contempt**, these enemies also *slandered* the psalmist (**sit and speak against me**). Slander goes beyond our "stranger" status. When the world thinks we are strange and wonders if we belong, it sees us correctly. When they slander us, they tell lies about us and falsely accuse us.

iii. "The best way to deal with slander is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove the sting from it. Our own attempts at clearing ourselves are usually failures." (Spurgeon)

c. **Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors:** The psalmist delighted and trusted in God's word much more than in the high people of this earth (such as **princes**).

i. "Most men covet a prince's good word, and to be spoken ill of by a great man is a great

discouragement to them, but the Psalmist bore his trial with holy calmness.... While his enemies took counsel with each other the holy man took counsel with the testimonies of God." (Spurgeon)

ii. **My counselors:** "Yet a mere cursory reading will never realize to us its holy delight or counsel. It must be brought home to our own experiences, and consulted on those trivial occasions of every day, when, unconscious of our need of Divine direction, we are too often inclined to lean to our own counsel." (Bridges)

iii. In this section the psalmist saw many things that hindered his reception of the word of God and his fellowship with God, and he prayed to be protected from them.

- He saw the danger of a dead soul and a cold heart; therefore he prayed, "*Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word.*"
- He saw the danger of darkened understanding; therefore he prayed, "*Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.*"
- He saw the danger of living as a stranger in a strange land; therefore he prayed, "*Do not hide Your commandments from me.*"
- He saw his own weakness and instability; therefore he prayed, "*My soul breaks with longing.*"
- He saw the danger of pride, evident in those who attacked him; therefore he recognized that the proud are "*the cursed, who stray for Your commandments.*"
- He saw the reproach and contempt that came upon him, and how those could shake his standing; therefore he prayed, "*Remove from me reproach and contempt.*"

- He saw rulers plotting against him; therefore he prayed, "*Your testimonies are my delight.*"

iv. "He rises superior to these sorrowful circumstances by keeping the testimonies, meditating on the statutes, and so finding delight therein." (Morgan)

D. Daleth ? : Revived from the dust.

1. (25) *A prayer for revival from a soul who feels dead.*

My soul clings to the dust;

Revive me according to Your word.

a. **My soul clings to the dust:** The psalmist used a strong image to say that he felt near death in his current crisis; **dust** was the place of death, the place of mourning, and the place of humiliation.

i. "Whatever was the cause of his complaint, it was no surface evil, but an affair of his inmost spirit; his *soul* cleaved to the dust; and it was not a casual and accidental falling into the dust, but a continuous and powerful tendency, or *cleaving* to the earth." (Spurgeon)

b. **Revive me according to Your word:** From this low place, the prayer for *revival* came. The psalmist asked for life and vitality to be restored, and he asked that it happen **according to Your word**.

i. Revival comes from a sense of spiritual need and lowliness. True revival – in the Biblical and historical sense – is marked by a shamed awareness of sin and an urgency to confess and make things right (mentioned verse 26).

ii. The psalmist knew what he needed. "One would have thought that he would have asked for comfort or upraising, but he knew that these would come out of increased life, and therefore he sought that

blessing which is the root of the rest. When a person is depressed in spirit, weak, and bent towards the ground, the main thing is to increase his stamina and put more life into him; then his spirit revives.” (Spurgeon)

iii. **According to Your word** shows us that God *uses* His word in bringing revival. Works that claim to be revival can be measured **according to His word**.

2. (26-27) *Teach me, make me understand.*

**I have declared my ways, and You answered me;
Teach me Your statutes.**

**Make me understand the way of Your precepts;
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.**

a. **I have declared my ways...teach me Your statutes:** The idea behind **I have declared my ways** is that the psalmist told God *everything* about himself and his life. He confessed fully and freely before God.

i. “Can each one of us now say, in this sense, ‘I have declared my ways’ to the Lord? For this should be done, not only at our first coming to him, but continually throughout the whole of our life. We should look over each day, and sum up the errors of the day, and say, ‘I have declared my ways,’ – my naughty ways, my wicked ways, my wandering ways, my backsliding ways, my cold, indifferent ways, my proud ways.” (Spurgeon)

ii. The psalmist had a wonderful liberty in conversation; he spoke to God as a dear friend. “How often do we treat our Almighty Friend as if we were weary of dealing with him!” (Bridges)

b. **Make me understand the way of Your precepts:** The psalmist understood that he needed more than

knowledge; he also needed *understanding*. With both he would **meditate on God's wonderful works**.

i. **Make me understand**: "It is concerned with a deep understanding, one that goes beyond a mere understanding of the words to a profound understanding of what they reveal about the nature of God, the gospel, and God's ways." (Boice)

ii. "'Teach me thy statutes.' I think the psalmist means this, 'My Lord, I have told thee all; now, wilt thou tell me all? I have declared to thee my ways; now, wilt thou teach me thy ways? I have confessed to thee how I have broken thy statutes; wilt thou not give me thy statutes back again?'" (Spurgeon)

3. (28) *A plea for strength from a shrinking soul.*

**My soul melts from heaviness;
Strengthen me according to Your word.**

a. **My soul melts from heaviness**: The problems surrounding the psalmist (as seen in verses 17-24) made his soul heavy, as if it would melt. He felt that he had no strength or stability within.

b. **Strengthen me according to Your word**: Therefore, he prayed for *strength*, and that this strength would come both from and **according to God's word**.

i. "The singer is bowed down, overwhelmed. He sorely needs succour and strength. How does he seek it? Not by asking for pity, but by a determined application to the law of his God." (Morgan)

ii. "This *melting heaviness* has not wrought its work, until it has bowed us before the throne of grace with the pleading cry of faith – *Strengthen thou me!*" (Bridges)

4. (29-30) *Choosing the way of truth.*

**Remove from me the way of lying,
And grant me Your law graciously.
I have chosen the way of truth;
Your judgments I have laid *before me*.**

a. **Remove from me the way of lying.... I have chosen the way of truth:** The psalmist sensed the common temptation to lie; yet he determined to choose **the way of truth**.

i. **Remove me from the way of lying:** "...a sin that David, through diffidence, fell into frequently. See 1Sa 21:2; 1Sa 21:8, where he roundly telleth three or four lies; and the like he did, 1Sa 27:8; 1Sa 27:10; this evil he saw by himself, and here prayeth against it." (Trapp)

ii. **Grant me Your law graciously:** The verb translated **graciously** "...actually has the sense of 'graciously teach,' a single word. The full thought is, If we are to be kept from sin, it must be by the grace of God exercised through the teaching of his Word." (Boice)

b. **Your judgments I have laid before me:** This is *how* the psalmist was able to choose **the way of truth**: He was in close relationship with the word of God.

i. "Men do not drop into the right way by chance; they must choose it, and continue to choose it, or they will soon wander from it." (Spurgeon)

5. (31-32) *Rescue me; enlarge my heart.*

**I cling to Your testimonies;
O LORD, do not put me to shame!
I will run the course of Your commandments,
For You shall enlarge my heart.**

a. **I cling to Your testimonies; O LORD, do not put me to shame:** The psalmist understood that if he were

to give himself entirely to God – to **cling** to His word as a shipwrecked man clings to a floating plank in the sea – then he could trust that God would not allow him to be **put...to shame**. This was well-placed confidence.

i. In the beginning of the section, he is clinging to the dust (verse 25); by the end he is clinging to God's word. In the beginning he is laid low; now he is joyfully running with all his strength in the race God's word sets before him.

ii. The *clinging* of this verse connects well with the *choosing* of the previous verse. "Having once chosen our road, it remains that we persevere in it; since better had it been for us never to have known the way of truth, than to forsake it, when known." (Horne)

b. I will run the course of Your commandments:

After beginning low in the dust, now the psalmist is *running*. He has moved in a beautiful progression, from confessing to choosing to clinging to running.

c. **For You shall enlarge my heart:** The psalmist comes back to a familiar theme, not only of the greatness of God's word, but also of his acute sense of weakness and dependence upon God. He must have his **heart** enlarged: made bigger, stronger, better, and more steadfast. His confidence is that God would do this through His word.

i. "The remedy therefore is in that *enlargement*, which embraces a wider expanse of light, and a more full confidence of love.... He does not say – I will make no efforts, unless thou work for me; but if *thou wilt enlarge* – *I will run*. Weakness is not the plea for indolence, but for quickening grace.... The secret of Christian energy and success is a *heart enlarged* in the love of God." (Bridges)

E. He ??: A plea for guidance and life.

He is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and it is used at the beginning of verbs to make them causative. Therefore, the prayers in this section have the meaning, "Cause me to learn," "Cause me to understand," "Cause me to walk" and so forth.

1. (33-35) A prayer for instruction for righteous living.

**Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall keep it to the end.**

**Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law;
Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.**

**Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.**

a. **Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
and I shall keep it to the end:** The psalmist here stresses his great *desire* to keep the **way** and word of God. If God would teach him, he would persevere and **keep** the way **to the end**.

i. "The general desire expressed in this division is that for guidance. It is not an appeal for direction in some special case of difficulty, but rather for the clear manifestation of the meaning of the will of God." (Morgan)

ii. Only a God-changed heart can pray this. Left to himself, man is unable to keep the way and word of God (much less

keep it to the end). Php 2:13 tells us that it is *God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*. Here the psalmist prays as one who has received the *will*, and now prays for the *doing* of it.

iii. We should have the expectation of following God and His word **to the end**. "The end of our keeping the law will come only when we cease to breathe; no

good man will think of marking a date and saying, 'It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **Give me understanding...I shall observe it with my whole heart:** Without this understanding, the psalmist could not follow the desire of his transformed heart. We need **understanding** to persevere in the faith.

i. "The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before his supreme will." (Spurgeon)

ii. The psalmist had no doubt that God had *given* His word to us; his only fear was that he would not understand it (or be distracted from it). Yet he was utterly confident that God had spoken and that it could be understood rightly by the prayerful heart and mind.

iii. "'To the end' means without time limit, and 'with all my heart' means without reservation." (Boice)

c. **Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it:** Despite his **delight** and desire for God's word, the psalmist knows he cannot **walk** in God's **path** without God's empowering.

i. "We need no instruction in the way of sin.... But for a child of God, this is a prayer for constant use." (Bridges)

ii. "This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run." (Spurgeon)

2. (36-37) *God's word and the problem of material things.*

**Incline my heart to Your testimonies,
And not to covetousness.
Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,
And revive me in Your way.**

a. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness: The psalmist rightly understood that **covetousness** was a threat to walking in God's way. A heart inclined toward God's word would help him be satisfied in what God provides.

i. "He is asking God to turn his heart toward the Bible *rather than* allowing him to pursue selfish gain. For the first time he is confessing a potentially divided mind." (Boice)

ii. The Bible tells us how covetousness has ruined many people.

- Balaam sold out God's people and his own soul because he coveted (Numbers 22, 2Pe 2:14-16).
- Ahab murdered because he coveted (1Ki 21:1-13).
- David committed adultery and murder because he coveted (2Sa 11:2-17).
- Achan stole and brought Israel to defeat because he coveted (Jos 7:21).
- Judas stole from his fellow disciples and betrayed Jesus because he coveted (Joh 12:6 and Mat 26:14-16).
- Gehazi lied because he coveted (2Ki 5:20-27).
- Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit because he coveted (Act 5:1-6).

iii. "It is a handmaid of all sins; for there is no sin which a covetous man will not serve for his gain." (William Cowper, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things:** The psalmist rightly understood that some things, comparatively speaking, are **worthless things**. They are of no value for eternity and little value for the present age. He prayed that God would empower and enable him to **turn away** his **eyes** and attention from such things.

i. Many lives are wasted because people find themselves unwilling or unable to **turn away** their **eyes** from **worthless things**. The modern world with its media and entertainment technology brings before us an endless river of **worthless things** to occupy not only our eyes and time, but also our heart and minds.

ii. Some things are clearly **worthless**; some things are thought by many to be worthy, but are in fact **worthless**:

- **worthless** because they do no good.
- **worthless** because they do not last.
- **worthless** because they help no one else.
- **worthless** because they build no faith, hope, or love.
- **worthless** because they distract from things that are truly worthy.
- **worthless** because they have nothing to do with Jesus.

iii. The psalmist understood that he had a natural tendency toward **worthless things**, so he prayed for that natural tendency to be counter-acted. "Keeping the eye is a grand means of 'keeping the heart' (Num 15:39, Job 31:1)." (Bridges)

iv. Yet the eyes are so powerful that the psalmist had to pray – to pray for power outside himself to turn his eyes from worthless things. Does the psalmist have no eyelids or no muscles in his neck to turn the head? We all sympathize with this prayer; the eyes are so small – yet they can lead the whole person, and often lead to destruction. This is because the eyes lead the heart, lead the mind, and can lead the whole person. He prayed this, “...lest looking cause liking and lusting.” (Trapp)

v. He did not gouge out his own eyes or pray God to do it; instead he wanted to look another way, a better way. The best way to look away from sin is to look at something else. “The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as ‘*turned away*,’ for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects.” (Spurgeon)

c. **And revive me in Your way:** This is another prayer for revival – this time, to be made alive again in the **way** (or path) of God. The psalmist wanted to walk in God’s way, and to do it with a revived heart. He prayed for deadness in one direction – toward **worthless things** – and for life in another direction – toward God’s **way**.

i. “As I desire that I may be dull and dead in affections to worldly vanities; so, Lord, make me lively, and vigorous, and fervent in thy work and service.” (Poole)

ii. “He goes at once to him in whom were all his fresh springs. Life is the peculiar sphere of God: he is the Lord and Giver of life. No man ever received spiritual life, or the renewal of it, from any other source but the living God. Beloved, this is worth recollecting, for we are very apt when we feel ourselves declining to

look anywhere but to the Lord. We, too, often look within." (Spurgeon)

iii. God has many ways to revive us. Spurgeon listed some:

- *God's word*: "There are promises in God's word of such effectual restorative power, that, if they be but fed upon...they will make a dwarf into a giant in the twinkling of an eye."
- *Affliction*: "It is wonderful how a little touch of the spur will quicken our sluggish natures."
- *Great mercies*: "A man may be stirred up to diligence by a sense of gratitude to God for great mercies."
- *Christian example*: "I believe the reading of holy biographies has been exceedingly blessed of God."
- *Warm-hearted ministry*: "We should select not that which tickles the ear most, but that which most enlivens the heart."

3. (38-40) *Longing for revival from God's word.*

**Establish Your word to Your servant,
Who *is devoted* to fearing You.
Turn away my reproach which I dread,
For Your judgments *are* good.
Behold, I long for Your precepts;
Revive me in Your righteousness.**

a. **Establish Your word to Your servant**: This is not a prayer for God to change His word in some way; indeed, the word of the LORD is established forever (Isa 40:8). This is a prayer for a change in the heart and mind of the **servant** of God, so that the word of the LORD would be established in him.

i. **Establish Your word to Your servant** is much the same idea as what Mary said to Gabriel regarding the word of the Lord that he brought to her: *Let it be to me according to your word* (Luk 1:38).

b. **Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your judgments are good**: While declaring the goodness of God's judgments, the psalmist also prayed that his disgrace (**reproach**) would be turned away by the merciful God.

i. There is some **reproach** [disgrace] that we face as faithful followers of Jesus. Paul suffered these kind of reproaches (1Ti 4:10) and indeed even took pleasure in them (2Co 12:10). We expect and receive **reproach** as followers of Jesus (Heb 13:13, 1Pe 4:14).

ii. "The Lord's grace to him will remove disgrace and will promote the fear of God." (VanGemeren)

c. **I long for Your precepts; revive me in Your righteousness**: Again the psalmist prays for revival. The prayer comes from a heart that loves God's word (**Your precepts**), asking to be made alive in the **righteousness** of God.

F. Waw ? : Liberty comes from loving God's word.

"This commences a new portion of the Psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter Vau, or v. There are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence in each of the verses in this section the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction – vau." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

1. (41-42) *Receiving from God and defending against man.*

**Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD–
Your salvation according to Your word.**

So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches

**me,
For I trust in Your word.**

a. **Let Your mercies come...Your salvation according to Your word:** Here the psalmist acknowledged that *mercy and salvation come from God to man through the word of God*. The word of God doesn't merely point us toward mercy and salvation, as if it were a self-help book. It actually brings mercy and salvation to us.

i. The psalmist rightly said **mercies**, in the plural. God's gracious mercy to us is so great that it can only be described in the plural, with mercy piled on top of mercy.

ii. "He desires *mercy* as well as teaching, for he was guilty as well as ignorant." (Spurgeon)

- He needed mercy, not only teaching.
- He needed many mercies, so the request is in the plural.
- He needed mercy from God more than from man, so the request is made to God.

iii. The ancient Hebrew word here translated **mercies** is *hesed*. For centuries it was translated with words like *mercy*, *kindness*, and *love*. But in 1927, a scholar named Nelson Glueck (among others) argued that the real idea behind *hesed* was "covenant loyalty" and not so much love or mercy. Many disagreed and there is no good reason for changing the long-held understanding of

hesed and taking it as a word that mainly emphasizes covenant loyalty (see R. Laird Harris on *hesed* in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*).

iv. "It must *come to me*; or I shall never come to it."
(Bridges)

b. **So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word:** Trust in God's word provides an answer to those who reproach us. The disapproving voices we often hear can be answered by our abiding trust in the approval that we believers find in God.

i. When we believe who God is and what He has done for us in Jesus Christ, the disapproval of this world is answered.

2. (43-44) *A prayer that the word of God would remain in the mouth of the psalmist.*

**And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
For I have hoped in Your ordinances.
So shall I keep Your law continually,
Forever and ever.**

a. **Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth:** This request is rooted in the understanding that it is only by the goodness and grace of God that His word does dwell with us. Therefore the prayer comes that it may continue so.

i. This is true for humanity in general; hypothetically, God might have created man yet never communicated with him by His word.

ii. Yet it is also true for the individual who is awakened and attentive to God's word – because of the work of God in him – so it is wise and worthy to pray that it would remain so.

iii. It is true most of all for those who proclaim the word of God. "He who has once preached the gospel from his heart is filled with horror at the idea of being

put out of the ministry; he will crave to be allowed a little share in the holy testimony, and will reckon his silent Sabbaths to be days of banishment and punishment.” (Spurgeon)

b. **For I have hoped in Your ordinances:** His past hope is the ground for his future expectation. He has **hoped** in the word of God (**ordinances**) in the past, and he has not been disappointed.

c. **So shall I keep Your law continually:** The psalmist wanted God’s word to remain in his **mouth** so that he could keep God’s law. This was to glorify God through obedience to His word, not for any self-serving purpose.

3. (45-48) *Loving the word that brings liberty.*

And I will walk at liberty,

For I seek Your precepts.

I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings,

And will not be ashamed.

And I will delight myself in Your commandments,

Which I love.

My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments,

Which I love,

And I will meditate on Your statutes.

a. **And I will walk at liberty:** Having just spoken of the obedience that comes from having God’s word within, the psalmist now testifies that this obedience brings a life of **liberty**. Freedom comes through obedience and submission to God.

i. It is proven in many lives, in both the positive and the negative: Obedience and the pursuit of God’s word and wisdom lead to **liberty**. Disobedience, rejection of God’s word, and reliance upon one’s own wisdom lead to bondage.

ii. "Saints find no bondage in sanctity. The Spirit of holiness is a free spirit; he sets men at liberty and enables them to resist every effort to bring them under subjection. The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King's highway for freemen."
(Spurgeon)

b. **I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed:** This is an example of the **liberty** just mentioned. To have the boldness and ability to speak freely of God and His great word before **kings** and the great men of this earth shows true **liberty**.

i. "This is part of his liberty; he is free from fear of the greatest, proudest, and most tyrannical of men."
(Spurgeon)

c. **And I will delight myself in Your commandments:** That he set this in an **I will** statement shows that delighting in God's word is a choice, a matter of the will. The psalmist didn't wait for a feeling of delight to overcome him; he simply said, **I will delight myself in Your commandments**.

i. In verse 44, the psalmist proclaimed: *So shall I keep Your law continually*. In the verses following he lists at least three things that come from this life of obedience: **liberty**, confidence (**will not be ashamed**), and **delight**. These are blessings of the obedient life – blessings not earned by our obedience, but simply enjoyed by those of us who will keep His law continually.

d. **Which I love...which I love:** The strength and the depth of the psalmist's love for God's word are impressive. That love is manifested not only in the feeling of **delight**, but also in an act of honor (**My hands**

also I will lift up to Your commandments), and time and energy spent with God's word (**I will meditate**).

i. We may say that all true love has these three components: feeling, the giving of honor, and the desire to spend time and energy in knowing the beloved. This is a good measure of our love for God's word.

ii. **My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments:** "A bold expression of yearning for God's revelation in Scripture." (Kidner)

iii. "O shame to Christians who feel so little affection to the *Gospel of Christ*, when we see such cordial, conscientious, and inviolate attachment in a Jew to the laws and ordinances of Moses, that did not afford a thousandth part of the privileges!" (Clarke)

iv. "Why then is the Bible read only – not *meditated on*? Because it is not *loved*. We do not go to it, as the hungry man to his food, as the miser to his treasure. The loss is incalculable." (Bridges)

G. Zayin ? : The power of God's word to comfort and strengthen.

1. (49-50) *God's word brings comfort.*

**Remember the word to Your servant,
Upon which You have caused me to hope.
This *is* my comfort in my affliction,
For Your word has given me life.**

a. **Remember the word to Your servant:** The psalmist understood that God could never forget His word. Speaking in the manner of men, this was a plea for God to fulfill the promises stated in His word. God wants His people to plead His stated promises back to Him in prayer.

i. "When we hear any promise in the word of God, let us turn it into a prayer. God's promises are his bonds. Sue him on his bond. He loves that we should wrestle with him by his promises." (Sibbes, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. Spurgeon said that he often carried with him a small book of God's promises (*Clarke's Precious Promises*), and he turned to specific promises to help him at needful times. "But God – let us speak with reverence – when he gives a promise, binds himself with cords of his own making. He binds himself down to such and such a course when he says that such and such a thing shall be. Hence, when you grasp the promise, you get a hold on God." (Spurgeon)

iii. **To Your servant:** "If God's word to us as his servants is so precious, what shall we say of his word to us as his sons?" (Spurgeon)

b. **Upon which You have caused me to hope:** Again the psalmist understood that his trust and **hope** in God's word should not be credited to his own spiritual greatness or genius. It came because God worked in him to **hope** in His word.

i. This also demonstrates that the word of God is *worthy* of such hope. "It is an irrevocable word. Man has to eat his words, sometimes, and unsay his say. He would perform his engagement, but he cannot. It is not that he is unfaithful, but that he is unable. Now this is never so with God. His word never returns to him void. Go, find ye the snowflakes winging their way like white doves back to heaven! Go, find the drops of rain rising upward like diamonds flung up from the hand of a mighty man to find a lodging-place in the cloud from which they fell! Until the snow and the rain return to heaven, and mock the ground

which they promised to bless, the word of God shall never return to him void." (Spurgeon)

c. **This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life:** When the psalmist recalled how faithfully and powerfully God's word had brought him **life** in the past, he then found **comfort** in his present **affliction**.

i. "It would seem as though this section expressed the feelings of one in the midst of affliction. It does not sing the song of deliverance therefrom. The word is distinctly, 'This is my comfort in my affliction.'" (Morgan)

ii. In this stanza there is no specific prayer for help. Instead, there are "...statements by the writer that he trusts what God has written in his law and will continue to love it and obey its teachings. It is a way of acknowledging that suffering is common to human beings." (Boice)

iii. In the midst of **affliction**, the psalmist proclaims his comfort: **this is my comfort**. "The worldling clutches his money-bag, and says, 'this is my comfort'; the spendthrift points to his gaiety and shouts, 'this is my comfort'; the drunkard lifts his glass and sings, 'this is my comfort'; but the man whose hope comes from God feels the life-giving power of the word of the Lord, and he testifies, 'this is my comfort.'" (Spurgeon)

iv. **My comfort...my affliction:** In the midst of an **affliction** suited to the individual, the believer can also enjoy a **comfort** specifically suited to him. It is **my** affliction, and it is **my** comfort.

d. **Your word has given me life:** All should remember (especially preachers) that the word of God *gives* **life**; the

preacher does not give it life. It isn't as if the poor, dead word of God lay lifeless until the wonderful preacher came and breathed life into it. Instead, the word of God gives life – especially to dead preachers.

2. (51-52) *God's word adds strength to comfort.*

**The proud have me in great derision,
Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.
I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD,
And have comforted myself.**

a. **The proud have me in great derision:** In this section as well as the previous, the idea is that the psalmist is mocked and reproached for his love and trust in God's word. These **proud** mockers look at the psalmist and his dedication to the word of God, and they hold him **in great derision**.

i. And so it has ever been: those who love and trust God's word – especially with the depth and passion reflected by the psalmist in this mighty psalm – are mocked by **the proud** who want nothing to do with God and His word.

b. **Yet I do not turn aside from Your law:** We almost sense a note of *defiance* in the psalmist. No matter how great the **derision** that comes from the **proud**, he will hold faithful to God and His word.

i. Great harm has been done to the cause of God when believers find themselves unable to endure this **great derision**, and they begin to down-grade their view of God's word and its inerrant character. Hoping to appease or impress the **proud**, they lead themselves and others to trust and love God's word less. Such ones should instead find their strength and comfort in these very passages and declare, "**Yet I do not turn aside from Your law.**"

ii. "Christian! Be satisfied with the approbation of your God. Has he not adopted you by his Spirit, sealed you for his kingdom? And is not this 'honour that cometh from God only' enough – far more than enough – to counterbalance the *derision of the proud*?" (Bridges)

c. **I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself:** When challenged to lessen his confidence and trust in God's word by the **proud** mockers, the psalmist wisely responded by *increasing* his confidence in God's word! Therein he **comforted** himself.

i. The **proud** who hold the simple believer in **great derision** enjoy the applause and honor of some in this world; but they can never know the comfort that the psalmist wrote of here.

ii. There was specific comfort in remembering **Your judgments of old, O LORD**. In a similar way, we are comforted and strengthened in hope as we remember how God has dealt with men and circumstances in the past. "The grinning of the proud will not trouble us when we remember how the Lord dealt with their predecessors in bygone periods; he destroyed them at the deluge, he confounded them at Babel, he drowned them at the Red Sea, he drove them out of Canaan: he has in all ages bared his arm against the haughty, and broken them as potters' vessels." (Spurgeon)

iii. "When we see no present display of the divine power it is wise to fall back upon the records of former ages, since they are just as available as if the transactions were of yesterday, seeing the Lord is always the same." (Spurgeon)

3. (53-56) *Describing the comfort and strength the word of God brings.*

**Indignation has taken hold of me
Because of the wicked, who forsake Your law.
Your statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.
I remember Your name in the night, O LORD,
And I keep Your law.
This has become mine,
Because I kept Your precepts.**

a. **Indignation has taken hold of me:** When the psalmist thought of the **wicked** – perhaps the proud who held him and others who trusted in God’s word in great derision – it made him indignant. He recognized their great sin: **who forsake Your law**.

i. Those who deny or depreciate God’s word do just this – they **forsake** the word of God. Worse yet, they often lead others to do the same. Jesus graphically described the penalty for those who lead others astray (Luk 17:1-2).

b. **Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage:** God’s word (**Your statutes**) makes him sing with joy and confidence. Those who know the power of singing God’s word have great comfort **in the house of** their **pilgrimage**.

i. Even as Paul and Silas could sing in the midst of suffering (Act 16:25), so could the psalmist. Even as a pilgrim, not yet home and afflicted, he could sing unto his God.

ii. “A pilgrim is a person who is travelling through one country to another.... We are hurrying through this world as through a foreign land. We are in this country, not as residents, but only as visitors, who take this country en route for glory.” (Spurgeon)

iii. "Since our songs are so very different from those of the proud, we may expect to join a very different choir at the last, and sing in a place far removed from their abode." (Spurgeon)

c. **I remember Your name in the night, O LORD:** This is true both literally and figuratively. In the dark of night when fears and anxieties often rush in upon us, the psalmist finds comfort in the **name** of the LORD, revealed to him by God's word. Yet this comfort is also real in the figurative **night** that believers may face.

i. The words following – **And I keep Your law** – remind us that the remembrance of God **in the night** made for an obedient life with God in the daytime. "The good effect of hours thus secretly passed in holy exercises, will appear openly in our lives and conversations." (Horne)

ii. "If we have no memory for the name of Jehovah we are not likely to remember his commandments: if we do not think of him secretly we shall not obey him openly." (Spurgeon)

d. **This has become mine:** This is a glorious, triumphant statement from the psalmist. The power, goodness, comfort, and strength of God's word are not only ideas or theories to him. By faith – faith that has come by God's word (Rom 10:17) – he can rightly say, **This has become mine!**

i. "...this' being the cheer and comfort so tellingly described in Psa 119:54 f. Although obedience does not earn these blessings, it turns us around to receive them." (Kidner)

ii. "We are not rewarded for our works, but there is a reward *in* them." (Spurgeon)

e. **Because I kept Your precepts:** The psalmist enjoys this triumph not only because he knows the word of God, but also because he obeys them (**I kept Your precepts**). It isn't that the psalmist claims perfect obedience (as shown in verses 57-58 following), but a life generally lived in faithfulness to the word of God.

H. Heth ? : Hurrying to God with all my heart.

1. (57-58) *Loyalty proclaimed and mercy requested.*

You are my portion, O LORD;

I have said that I would keep Your words.

I entreated Your favor with *my* whole heart;

Be merciful to me according to Your word.

a. **You are my portion, O LORD:** These are the words of a *satisfied soul*. The psalmist is satisfied with the **portion** received, and that portion is the **LORD** Himself.

i. Spurgeon observed that this was "...a broken sentence. The translators have mended it by insertions, but perhaps it had been better to have left it alone, and then it would have appeared as an exclamation, – 'My portion, O Lord!'"

ii. "The psalmist is saying that, like the Levites, he wants his portion of divine blessing to be God himself since nothing is better and nothing will ever fully satisfy his or anyone else's heart but God himself. To possess God is truly to have everything." (Boice)

iii. We understand this in the broader context of this psalm. The **LORD** Himself is satisfaction to the psalmist *because God has come to him through His word*. It isn't as if the word of God is in one place, and the psalmist must go to another place for experience of and satisfaction in God. He can say, "**You are my portion, O LORD**, and I receive that **portion** as You meet me in Your word and I live it out."

iv. Thomas Brooks – quoted in Spurgeon – said that we could answer every temptation with the reply, “The Lord is my portion.” If He truly is our portion, we don’t need to look for satisfaction in fleshly pursuits.

v. “He is an exceedingly covetous fellow to whom God is not sufficient; and he is an exceeding fool to whom the world is sufficient. For God is an inexhaustible treasury of all riches, sufficing innumerable men; while the world has mere trifles and fascinations to offer, and leads the soul into deep and sorrowful poverty.” (Thomas Le Blanc, cited in Spurgeon)

b. I have said that I would keep Your words: This promise would be an empty vow without the empowering of God in our lives. When we have a close connection with God and receive and enjoy Him as our **portion**, we also receive strength to **keep** His **words**.

i. “But if we take the Lord as our *portion*, we must take him as our king.... Here is the Christian complete – taking *the Lord* as his portion, and his *word* as his rule.” (Bridges)

ii. He was public in this statement of his intentions. “*I have said*; I have not only purposed it in my own heart, but have professed and owned it before others, and I do not repent of it.” (Poole)

c. I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word: Here the psalmist understood both the *urgency* to seek and please God, and the *inability* to completely do so.

i. The words translated **Your favor** are literally, “Your *face*.” To enjoy the face of God is to experience His favor. The psalmist here declares that he has sought the face of God.

ii. He sought the face of God with a sense of *urgency*, reflected in the words **entreated** and **whole heart**. The psalmist understood how important it was to seek the favor of God and to please Him with his life.

iii. He sought the face of God with a sense of *inability*, shown in the request **be merciful to me**. No matter how diligently the psalmist would seek after God and seek to please Him, he would always remain in need of mercy.

d. **Be merciful to me according to Your word**: This is a blessed and glorious apparent contradiction. The request for mercy is not based on it being a right, or that he deserves it. The psalmist speaks as one who expects mercy **according to** the promise of God's word.

i. While we have no *natural* right to mercy, there is a *spiritual* right to mercy for all who ask according to His promise.

2. (59-60) *A life directed toward God's word.*

**I thought about my ways,
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.
I made haste, and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.**

a. **I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies**: Time spent in God's word has given the psalmist sober reflection about his **ways**. This gave the insight necessary to turn in the right direction.

i. "While studying the word he was led to study his own life, and this caused a mighty revolution. He came to the word, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his father." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Blaise Pascal, the brilliant French philosopher and devout Christian, loved Psalms 119. He is another person who had memorized it, and he called verse 59

'the turning point of man's character and destiny.' He meant that it is vital for every person to consider his or her ways, understand that our ways are destructive and will lead us to destruction, and then make an about-face and determine to go in God's ways instead." (Boice)

iii. **I thought about my ways:** "How many, on the other hand, seem to pass through the world into eternity without a serious *thought on their ways!* Multitudes live for the world – forget God and die! This is their history." (Bridges)

b. **I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments:** Once on the right path (with the **feet** having been **turned**), the psalmist can now speed his way in the course of obedience.

i. It is dangerous to make haste on a wrong path; it is glorious to make **haste** on the right way. We can also say that making **haste** to God is a sign of revival. When God is moving in power, people make haste to get right with him.

ii. "Speed in repentance and speed in obedience are two excellent things. We are too often in haste to sin; O that we may be in a greater hurry to obey." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Did not delay:** "The original word, which we translate *delayed not*, is amazingly emphatical.... I did not stand *what-what-whating*; or, as we used to express the same sentiment, *shilly-shallying* with myself: I was *determined*, and so set out. The *Hebrew* word, as well as the *English*, strongly marks indecision of mind, positive action being suspended, because the mind is so unfixed as not to be able to make a choice." (Clarke)

iv. “*Delay* is the word used of Lot as he ‘lingered’, reluctant to leave Sodom [Gen 19:16].” (Kidner)

3. (61-62) *Faithfulness to God’s word in adversity.*

**The cords of the wicked have bound me,
But I have not forgotten Your law.
At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You,
Because of Your righteous judgments.**

a. **The cords of the wicked have bound me, but I have not forgotten Your law:** The psalmist was attacked and afflicted by adversaries; but they could not make him forget or forsake the law of God.

b. **At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You:** The heart and the mind of the psalmist are so filled with **thanks** and appreciation toward God that he finds his sleep interrupted by these high thoughts.

i. **I will rise:** “The Psalmist observed posture; he did not lie in bed and praise. There is not much in the position of the body, but there is something, and that something is to be observed whenever it is helpful to devotion and expressive of our diligence or humility.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Thomas Manton (cited in Spurgeon) listed several notable lessons to be drawn from the psalmist’s midnight devotion:

- His devotion was earnest and passionate; the daylight hours did not give him enough time to thank God.
- His devotion to God was sincere, shown by its secrecy. He was willing to thank God when no one else could see him or be impressed by his devotion.
- He regarded time as precious; he even used the hours normally given to sleep for devotion to God.

- He regarded devotion to God as more important than natural refreshment. He was willing to sacrifice a legitimate thing (sleep) for the pursuit of God.
- He showed great reverence to God even in secret devotion, by rising up to praise Him. Praise requires something of both soul and body.

4. (63-64) *Friendship with those who are friends of God's word.*

**I am a companion of all who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.
The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy;
Teach me Your statutes.**

a. **I am a companion of all who fear You:** The psalmist enjoyed the special fellowship present among those who honor and hold God's word, **of those who keep Your precepts.**

i. This wonderful companionship is the testimony of countless Christians, who experience warm fellowship across the lines of race, class, nationality, and education.

ii. "These then are the Lord's people; and union with him is in fact union with them.... To meet the Christian in ordinary courtesy, *not in unity of heart*, is a sign of an unspiritual walk with God." (Bridges)

iii. "If then we are not ashamed to confess ourselves Christians, let us not shrink from walking in fellowship with Christians. Even if they should exhibit some repulsive features of character, they bear the image of him, whom we profess to love." (Bridges)

b. **The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy:** Having experienced this broad companionship, the psalmist felt the goodness of God filling the **earth**. This experience of

God's **mercy** increased his desire for knowledge and obedience (**teach me Your statutes**).

i. We see again the course of a never-ending cycle. The pursuit of God in and through His word leads to satisfaction and blessing. That satisfaction and blessing leads to a deeper pursuit, leading to even more satisfaction and blessing.

ii. When one lives in this glorious cycle, it feels as if the whole **earth** is **full** of the **mercy** of God. It is a glorious, blessed life with the experience of mercy all around.

I. Teth ? : God's word brings benefit from a time of affliction.

1. (65-66) A prayer of praise and petition.

**You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your word.
Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
For I believe Your commandments.**

a. **You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word:** This section begins with a note of *gratitude*. The psalmist finds himself thankful for God's good dealing toward him, and that blessings have come **according to His word**.

i. We don't think about it enough, but it is wonderfully true that **You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD**. Think of all the ways God has dealt well with us. He chose us, He called us, He drew us to Himself. He rescued us, He declared us righteous, He forgave us, He put His Spirit within us, He adopted us into His family. He loves us, He makes us kings and priests and co-workers with Him, and He rewards all our work for Him.

ii. **According to Your word** implies that the psalmist not only knew the promises of God and pled them in prayer (as in verse 49); he also *received* the promises by faith and experienced them.

iii. This *should* be the life experience of every child of God. We know that God has **deal well** with us, and we know that it has been **according to His word**.

iv. "When we are thus reaping the fruitful discipline of our Father's school (Heb 12:11), must we not put a fresh seal to our testimony – *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord?* But why should we delay our acknowledgment till we come out of our trial? Ought we not to give it even in the midst of our 'heaviness?'" (Bridges)

b. **Teach me good judgment and knowledge:** This prayer for *wisdom* comes from a blessed life. Having received this well-dealing from God, the psalmist understood the need to live in **good judgment and knowledge**. The blessings were given to him for wise and obedient living to the glory of God.

i. **Good judgment:** "...Hebrew, *the goodness of taste*, an experimental sense and relish of divine things." (Poole)

ii. "*Judgment*, here, is literally 'taste', not in our sense of artistic judgment, but of spiritual discrimination: 'for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food' (Job 34:3). Cf. Heb 5:14." (Kidner)

iii. We far too easily forget our great need to learn **good judgment and knowledge**, and are far too ready to trust our own heart and conscience. "The faculty of conscience partakes, with every other power of man, of the injury of the fall; and therefore, with all its intelligence, honesty, and power, it is liable

to misconception.... Conscience, therefore, must not be trusted without the light of the word of God; and most important is the prayer – *Teach me good judgment and knowledge.*" (Bridges)

iv. "No school, but the school of Christ – no teaching, but the teaching of the Spirit – can ever give this *good judgment and knowledge.*" (Bridges)

c. **For I believe Your commandments:** He wanted God to **teach** him because he really did **believe** the commands and words of God. If we really do believe His word, then we should want Him to teach us to live wisely and obediently.

2. (67-68) *The goodness of God seen even in correction.*

**Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.
You are good, and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.**

a. **Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word:** The psalmist speaks here of lessons learned the hard way. There was a time when he was far more likely to go **astray** from God's word and the wise life revealed in it. Yet, under a season of affliction, he was now devoted to the word of God.

i. This principle has been demonstrated in nearly everyone who has pursued God. This is one reason why God appoints affliction for His people (1Th 3:3).

ii. "Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray." (Spurgeon)

iii. Bridges relates an old church prayer: *In all time of our wealth – Good Lord, deliver us!* "A time of wealth is indeed a time of special need. It is hard to restrain

the flesh, when so many are the baits for its indulgence." (Bridges)

iv. "As the scourging and beating of the garment with a stick beateth out the moths and dust, so do afflictions [beat out] corruptions from the heart." (Trapp)

v. "Many have been humbled under affliction, and taught to know themselves and humble themselves before God, that probably without this could never have been saved; after this, they have been serious and faithful. *Affliction* sanctified is a great blessing; unsanctified, it is an additional curse." (Clarke)

vi. "We gain solace here by remembering what the Bible says even of Jesus, 'Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered' (Heb 5:8)."

(Boice)

b. You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes: This important and precious line follows the recognition of affliction and the good it has done in life. The psalmist did not become bitter or resentful toward God for the affliction that brought him to greater obedience.

i. Despite the affliction – which we should regard as genuine – he proclaimed, "**You are good, and do good.**" In fact, he even wanted *more* instruction from God, saying "**Teach me Your statutes.**" This is said with the implicit understanding that this teaching might require more affliction; yet it was the psalmist's desire. This shows how confident he was in the goodness of God.

ii. "Affliction is not the most frequently mentioned matter.... The most prominent word in these verses is 'good.' This is the *teth* stanza. *Teth* is the first letter

of the Hebrew word 'good' (*tov*), so it was a natural thought for the composer of the psalm to use 'good' at the beginning of these verses." (Boice)

iii. In the most basic sense, this is praise for who God *is* (**You are good**), and praise for what God *does* (**and do good**). These are always two wonderful reasons for praise.

3. (69-70) *Delight in God's law despite attacks from adversaries.*

**The proud have forged a lie against me,
But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart.
Their heart is as fat as grease,
But I delight in Your law.**

a. **The proud have forged a lie against me:** In reading of the godly and humble character of the psalmist, it is almost shocking to hear that he has enemies who carefully **forged a lie against** him. Yet he explains how this is possible: they are **the proud**, who are no doubt convicted in conscience and spiteful of his humble, obedient, teachable life before God.

i. "If the Lord *does us good*, we must expect Satan to do us evil...he readily puts it into the hearts of his children to *forge lies against* the children of God!" (Bridges)

ii. "To such slanders and calumnies, a good life is the best answer. When a friend once told Plato, what scandalous stories his enemies had propagated concerning him, – I will live so, replied the great Philosopher, that nobody shall believe them." (Horne)

b. **But I will keep Your precepts with my whole heart:** The lies of the proud did not distract or overly discourage the psalmist. Instead, he dedicated himself to

greater obedience and honor of God, pledging to obey Him with his **whole heart**.

i. "If the mud which is thrown at us does not blind our eyes or bruise our integrity it will do us little harm. If we keep the precepts, the precepts will keep us in the day of [insults] and slander." (Spurgeon)

c. **Their heart is as fat as grease, but I delight in Your law:** Their **fat** heart was not good for their physical or spiritual health. It meant that their hearts were dull, insensitive, and drowning in luxury and excess. In contrast, the psalmist found **delight** in the word of God.

i. "The tremendous blow of almighty justice has benumbed his heart.... 'seared with a hot iron' (1Ti 4:2), and therefore without tenderness; 'past feeling' (Eph 4:19); unsoftened by the power of the word." (Bridges)

ii. "There is and always ought to be a vivid contrast between the believer and the sensualist, and that contrast is as much seen in the affections of the heart as in the actions of the life: *their* heart is as fat as grease, and our heart is delighted with the law of the Lord." (Spurgeon)

iii. "As if he should say, My heart is a lean heart, a hungry heart, my soul loveth and rejoiceth in thy word. I have nothing else to fill it but thy word, and the comforts I have from it; but their hearts are fat hearts; fat with the world, fat with lust; they hate the word. As a full stomach loatheth meat and cannot digest it; so wicked men hate the word, it will not go down with them, it will not gratify their lusts." (William Fenner, cited in Spurgeon)

4. (71-72) *Appreciation for the goodness of God even in seasons of affliction.*

***It is good for me that I have been afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.
The law of Your mouth is better to me
Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.***

a. **It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes:** The psalmist repeats the idea from earlier in this section (verse 67). This repetition is an effective way to communicate emphasis. Affliction, brought under the wisdom and guidance of God's word, did genuine **good** in his life.

i. "I, for my part, owe more, I think, to the anvil and to the hammer, to the fire and to the file, than to anything else. I bless the Lord for the correctives of his providence by which, if he has blessed me on the one hand with sweets, he has blessed me on the other hand with bitters." (Spurgeon)

ii. "'I never' – said Luther – 'knew the meaning of God's word, until I came into affliction. I have always found it one of my best schoolmasters.'" (Bridges)

iii. Yet we must guard against the misunderstanding that seasons of affliction automatically make one better or godlier. Sadly, there are many who are *worse* from their affliction – because they fail to turn to God's word for wisdom and life-guidance in such times. The worst affliction of all is a wasted affliction, wasted because we did not turn to God and gained nothing from it.

iv. This also shows how valuable the learning of God's word was to the psalmist. It was entirely worth it for him to endure affliction, if only he could **learn** the

statutes of God in the process. This made a time of painful affliction worthwhile.

v. "Very little is to be learned without affliction. If we would be scholars we must be sufferers...God's commands are best read by eyes wet with tears." (Spurgeon)

vi. "By affliction God separates the sin which he hates from the soul which he loves." (John Mason, cited in Spurgeon)

b. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver: This is a logical extension of the thought in the previous verse. If the psalmist understands that even trouble can be good if it teaches him the word of God – if it is more valuable than his comfort – then it is also possible to say that it is more valuable than riches.

i. This great estimation of the word of God came from a life that had known affliction. It was love and appreciation from the field of battle, not the palaces of ease and comfort.

ii. "Herbert Lockyer recounts a story concerning the largest Bible in the world, a Hebrew manuscript weighing 320 pounds in the Vatican library. Long ago a group of Italian Jews asked to see this Bible and when they had seen it they told their friends in Venice about it. As a result a syndicate of Russian Jews tried to buy it, offering the church the weight of the book in gold. Julius the Second was Pope at that time, and he refused the offer, even though the value of such a large amount of gold was enormous.... Today we pay little to possess multiple copies of God's Word. But do we value it? In many cases, I am afraid not." (Boice)

iii. "Who can say this? Who *prefers* the law of his God, the Christ that bought him, and the heaven to which he hopes to go, when he can live no longer upon earth, *to thousands of gold and silver*? Yea, how many are there who, like Judas, *sell their Saviour* even for *thirty* pieces of silver? Hear this, ye lovers of the world and of money!" (Clarke)

iv. "The word of God must be nearer to us than our friends, dearer to us than our lives, sweeter to us than our liberty, and pleasanter to us than all earthly comforts." (John Mason, cited in Spurgeon)

J. Yod ? : Confidence in the Creator and His Word.

The yod stanza represents the small Hebrew letter Jesus referred to as a "jot" in Mat 5:18 : Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

1. (73) Surrendering to the word of the Creator.

**Your hands have made me and fashioned me;
Give me understanding, that I may learn Your
commandments.**

a. **Your hands have made me:** Here the psalmist proclaimed God as Creator, and understood certain obligations to God because he was **fashioned** by the hands of God.

i. **Fashioned me:** "The reference to God forming him is a deliberate echo of Genesis 2, which says God 'formed man from the dust of the ground' (Gen 2:7)." (Boice)

ii. The modern age, with its widespread denial of a Creator God, has a much lower sense of obligation to God as Creator. Despite the deeply seated rejection of God as Creator, man's obligation to his Maker

remains. The psalmist understood what many today forget or deny.

iii. To say that God is our Creator is to recognize:

- That we are obligated to Him as the One who gives us life.
- That we respect Him as One who is greater and smarter than we are.
- That He, as our designer, knows what is best for us.
- That since our beginning is connected to the invisible world, so our end will be also.

iv. "The consideration, that God made us, is here urged as an argument why he should not forsake and reject us, since every artist hath a value for his own work, proportioned to its excellence. It is, at the same time, and acknowledgement of the service we owe him, founded on the relation which a creature beareth to his Creator." (Horne)

v. "If God had roughly made us, and had not also elaborately fashioned us, this argument would lose much of its force; but surely from the delicate art and marvellous skill which the Lord has shown in the formation of the human body, we may infer that he is prepared to take equal pains with the soul till it shall perfectly bear his image." (Spurgeon)

vi. **Your hands:** "'Oh look upon the wounds of thine hands, and forget not the work of thine hands,' as Queen Elizabeth prayed." (Trapp)

b. **Give me understanding:** In his thoughts of God as Creator, the psalmist prayed for **understanding**. He recognized that this was something often misunderstood, and one could ask for and expect help in **understanding**

both how God created us and what our obligations are to our Maker.

i. We gain much **understanding** by considering God as Creator, and especially as the Creator of man. "Every part of creation bears the impress of God. Man – man alone – bears his image, his likeness. Everywhere we see his track – his footsteps. Here we behold his face." (Bridges)

c. **That I may learn Your commandments:** The understanding of God and man as Creator and creature should lead to this humble relationship in which man admits his need to **learn**: to learn God's word (**commandments**) and receive His word as *commands* from a wise, loving, and righteous Creator.

2. (74) *The common gladness of those who fear God.*

**Those who fear You will be glad when they see me,
Because I have hoped in Your word.**

a. **Those who fear You will be glad when they see me:** The psalmist considered that his righteous life would be an encouragement to others who also feared God. This was an additional reason to hear and obey God.

i. "When a man of God obtains grace for himself he becomes a blessing to others.... There are professors whose presence scatters sadness, and the godly quietly steal out of their company: may this never be the case with us." (Spurgeon)

ii. "They who 'fear God' are naturally 'glad when they see' and converse with one like themselves; but more especially so, when it is one whose faith and patience have carried him through troubles, and rendered him victorious over temptations; one who hath 'hoped in God's word,' and hath not been disappointed." (Horne)

b. **Because I have hoped in Your word:** His life could give encouragement and gladness to other righteous people **because** his hope and attention were put upon the **word** of God. Without this hope, his righteous life would be impossible.

3. (75-77) *Comfort from God's word in a time of affliction.*

**I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.
Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort,
According to Your word to Your servant.
Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live;
For Your law is my delight.**

a. **Your judgments are right...in faithfulness You have afflicted me:** His attention upon God's word has given the psalmist a wise and godly perspective even in seasons of suffering. He can proclaim the rightness of God's **judgments** even when *he* is afflicted.

i. It is one thing to say, "God has the right to do with me as He pleases." It is a greater thing to say that His **judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.**

ii. This was the place Job eventually came to through his long and desperate struggle through the Book of Job. He came to **know** that the **judgments** of the LORD were **right**, and even understood God's **faithfulness** in affliction. Eli, David, and the Shunammite mother had similar moments of understanding.

- Job could say in his affliction, *Blessed be the name of the LORD (Job 1:21).*

- Eli could say in his affliction, *It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him (1Sa 3:18).*

- David could say in his affliction, *Let him alone, and let him curse, for so the LORD has ordered him* (2Sa 16:11).
- The Shunammite mother could say in her affliction, *It is well* (2Ki 4:26).

b. **Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort , according to Your word:** The psalmist prayed on solid ground, asking on the basis of promises made in God's **word**. With such promises, he asked for **merciful kindness** in his affliction.

i. **According to Your word:** "Our prayers are according to the mind of God when they are according to the word of God." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Lord, these promises were given to be made good to some, and why not to me? I hunger; I need; I thirst; I wait. Here is thy hand-writing in thy word.... I am resolved to be as importunate [persistent to the point of annoyance] till I have obtained, and as thankful afterwards, as by thy grace I shall be enabled.... Thy promises are the discoveries of thy purposes, and vouchsafed [graciously given] as materials for our prayers; and in my supplications I am resolved every day to present and tender them back to thee." (Prayer of Monica, the mother of Augustine; cited in Bridges)

c. **Your word to Your servant:** The psalmist rightly received the word of God as something *personal* to himself. It was not only a word to mankind in general, or even the covenant people; it was something personal to the psalmist himself (**Your servant**).

d. **Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for Your law is my delight:** The psalmist prayed with the understanding that God's **tender mercies** came

to him through the word (**law**) of God. By staying close to God's word and letting it fill his life, he also received God's **tender mercies**.

i. "The mercies of God are 'tender mercies,' they are the mercies of a father to his children, nay, tender as the compassion of a mother over the son of her womb. They 'come unto' us, when we are not able to go to them." (Horne)

ii. Without the gift of these **tender mercies**, we find ourselves lost and discouraged. "All the candles in the world, in the absence of the sun, can never make the day. The whole earth, in its brightest visions of fancy, destitute of the Lord's love, can never cheer nor revive the soul." (Bridges)

iii. "Yet we have no just apprehension of these *tender mercies*, unless they *come unto us*. In the midst of the wide distribution, let me claim my interest. *Let them come unto me.*" (Bridges)

4. (78-80) *The contrast between the proud and those who fear God.*

**Let the proud be ashamed,
For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood;
But I will meditate on Your precepts.
Let those who fear You turn to me,
Those who know Your testimonies.
Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes,
That I may not be ashamed.**

a. **Let the proud be ashamed:** The psalmist said this not only out of a sense of God's righteousness, but also out of a sense of being personally wronged. These **proud** ones had **treated** him **wrongfully with falsehood**; therefore they should be put to shame.

i. "Shame is for the proud, for it is a shameful thing to be proud. Shame is not for the holy, for there is nothing in holiness to be ashamed of." (Spurgeon)

ii. If the proud ones who opposed the psalmist knew he was praying against them, they had good reason to be afraid. David's prayers made failure and doom for Ahithophel. Hezekiah's prayer meant failure and doom for the Assyrian army. The fasting of Esther and the Jews brought failure and doom for Haman. God knows how to defend His own who cry to Him.

iii. Yet even the prayer that **the proud be ashamed** is a prayer for their good. It is as the prayer of Asaph: *Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD (Psa 83:16)*.

b. **But I will meditate on Your precepts:** In contrast to the **proud** who loved lies, the psalmist loved and meditated on God's word.

i. "He would study the law of God and not the law of retaliation. The proud are not worth a thought. The worst injury they can do us is to take us away from our devotions; let us baffle them by keeping all the closer to our God when they are most malicious in their onslaughts." (Spurgeon)

ii. **I will meditate:** "Truths lie hid in the heart without efficacy or power, till improved by deep, serious, and pressing thoughts.... A sudden carrying a candle through a room, giveth us not so full a survey of the object, as when you stand a while beholding it. A steady contemplation is a great advantage." (Thomas Manton, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Let those who fear You turn to me:** The psalmist recognized the presence of proud enemies, but he did not believe that all were against himself or God. There

were others who feared God, and he could find companionship with them. They had much in common – they both were those who knew God’s word (**Those who know Your testimonies**).

i. **Those who fear...those who know:** “David has two descriptions for the saints, they are God-fearing and God-knowing. They possess both devotion and instruction; they have both the spirit and the science of true religion.” (Spurgeon)

ii. **Turn to me:** “As the believer finds trouble from the world, he prays that he may find help from the Lord’s people.... It is painful therefore to see Christians often walking aloof from each other, and suffering coldness, distance, differences and distrust to divide them from their brethren.” (Bridges)

iii. “Either, 1. Turn their eyes to me as a spectacle of God’s wonderful mercy; or rather, 2. Turn their hearts and affections to me, which have been alienated from me.” (Poole)

d. **Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes:** As the psalmist compared himself with the **proud** who spoke lies, he still recognized his need for greater obedience to God. He asked God, and depended on Him, for an obedient (**blameless**) heart and life.

i. The New Testament has many examples of hearts that were not **blameless**: Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, Alexander, and Demas (Mat 26:14-16; Act 5:1-11; 1Ti 1:20; 2Ti 4:10). Such examples should make us pray according to Psa 139:23 : *Search me, O God, and know my heart.*

ii. “Examine your settled judgment, your deliberate choice, your outgoing affections, your habitual, allowed practice; apply to every detection of

unsoundness the blood of Christ, as the sovereign remedy for the diseases of 'a deceitful and desperately wicked heart.'" (Bridges)

iii. "Let it be *perfect* – all given up to thee, and all possessed by thee." (Clarke)

e. **That I may not be ashamed:** This is a valid desire. The psalmist wanted a life lived **unashamed**. The desire was for a sense of no inward shame because he was right with God, and had no public shame in the eyes of others. His obedient life (**Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes**) would lead to this unashamed life.

i. In this section we are taught by the repetition of the plea, "**Let....**" Taken together, these make for a healthy life with God.

- Let me be comforted by Your kindness.
- Let me live by Your mercies.
- Let me be vindicated by God.
- Let me be in the presence of those who fear You.
- Let my heart be blameless.

K. Kaph ? : Fainting from affliction, revived by God's word.

"Some writers...pointed out that for the ancients there was often significance in the shape of the Hebrew letters. Such is the case here. This is the kaph stanza. Kaph is a curved letter, similar to a half circle, and it was often thought of as a hand held out to receive some gift or blessing.... He holds out his hand toward God as a suppliant." (Boice)

1. (81-82) Seeking comfort in the word of God.

**My soul faints for Your salvation,
But I hope in Your word.**

**My eyes fail from searching Your word,
Saying, "When will You comfort me?"**

a. **My soul faints for Your salvation:** The psalmist gives a sense of *desperation*. His soul aches for God, so much that it **faints** in waiting for the salvation he needs. Yet he has **hope in God's word**.

i. **Faints** has the idea of "coming to the end." (Kidner) It is same verb in a slightly different form is used in verse 87: *They almost made an end of me*. Fainting is a loss of strength; a collapse. Here the psalmist felt that his

soul was so weak, so empty of strength, that it was unable to stand.

ii. This place of *desperate yet not despairing* is known to the followers of God. The Apostle Paul related something of this in 2Co 4:8-9 : *We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed....* In it all, Paul could say, ... *we have the same spirit of faith* (2Co 4:13).

iii. **Your salvation:** What he wanted was *God's* salvation. "He wished for no deliverance but that which came from God, his one desire was for 'thy salvation.' But for that divine deliverance he was eager to the last degree." (Spurgeon)

b. **But I hope in Your word:** In contrast to the sense of weakness and failing, the psalmist found **hope** and strength in God's word. 1 Thessalonians speaks of the endurance (patience) of hope (1:3), and refers to the hope of salvation as a protecting helmet (5:8).

i. "Saul, under protracted trial, resorted to the devil for relief (1Sa 28:6-7).... Even a good man, under a few hours' trial, murmurs against God – nay, even

defends his murmuring (Jon 4:7-9). How did this man behave? When his *soul was fainting, his hope in the word* kept him from sinking." (Bridges)

ii. **I hope in Your word:** "Beloved, let none of us give way to despair. No doubt Satan will tell us that it is humble to despair, but, it is not so. The pride of despair is truly terrible. I believe that, when a man altogether doubts the power of God to save him, and gives himself up to sin because he thinks he cannot be saved, so far from there being any humility in it, it is the prouder action that depraved flesh and blood can perform. Man, how darest thou say that there is no hope for thee?" (Spurgeon)

c. **My eyes fail from searching Your word:** This indicates how diligently the psalmist read and studied God's word. *He studied so hard that his eyes hurt.* One reason he loved God's word so much was because he studied it so intently. God's word yields its treasures to us in proportion to our **searching** it.

d. **Saying, "When will You comfort me?"** This was *why* the psalmist searched so diligently. It was to find **comfort** in his present distress. Personal need continues to be a greater motivation for diligent study than theological curiosity.

i. "While the promised salvation is delayed, the afflicted soul thinketh every day a year, and looketh toward heaven for the accomplishment of God's word." (Horne)

ii. In his sermon titled *God's Time for Comforting*, Spurgeon sought to give some practical answers to the question, **"When will You comfort me?"**

- Comfort will come when we put away unbelief.

- Comfort will come when we are finished complaining.
- Comfort will come when we put away the sin that we tolerate.
- Comfort will come when we fulfill the duties we have neglected.

iii. When we reach out to God in obedient faith, His comfort is always available. The pain may continue, but God's comfort is there.

2. (83-84) Appreciating weakness and trusting God and His word.

**For I have become like a wineskin in smoke,
Yet I do not forget Your statutes.**

How many *are* the days of Your servant?

When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?

a. **I have become like a wineskin in smoke:** The psalmist felt weak, as if he were a fragile **wineskin** that had turned dry and had become black with **smoke**. His soul and spiritual life felt *dry*.

i. **A wineskin in smoke** was "...useless, shriveled, and unattractive because of being blackened with soot." (VanGermes) We don't know if the psalmist said this about his inward condition, his outward condition, or both.

ii. "My natural moisture is dried and burnt up; I am withered, and deformed, and despised, and my case grows worse and worse every day." (Poole)

iii. Though this illustration speaks about the difficult nature of the psalmist's trial, it also speaks to the character of the trial: "Our trials are smoke, but not

fire; they are very uncomfortable, but they do not consume us." (Spurgeon)

b. **Yet I do not forget Your statutes:** Despite his sense of weakness, he was determined to **not forget** God's **statutes**. Weakness would not make him **forget** God's word.

i. John Trapp quoted a martyr of the Christian faith: "No trouble must pull us from the love of the truth. You may pull my tongue out of my head, but not my faith out of my heart."

c. **How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?** Here the sense of weakness led the psalmist to despair that God would **execute judgment** against those who persecuted him.

i. Verse 84 is one of the few verses in the psalm that *does not* specifically mention God's word. The context leads us to feel that personal weakness and a sense of injustice have led the psalmist to such distraction and despair that he has lost focus on God's word.

ii. "This stanza has a great deal to say about the psalmist's enemies, as if at this point his thoughts were nearly monopolized by them." (Boice) Yet at the end of the stanza, his thoughts are once again on God and His word.

iii. "To complain *of* God is dishonourable unbelief. To complain to God is the mark of his 'elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bears long with them' (Luk 18:7)." (Bridges)

3. (85-86) *A cry for help when attacked and persecuted.*

**The proud have dug pits for me,
Which *is* not according to Your law.
All Your commandments *are* faithful;**

**They persecute me wrongfully;
Help me!**

a. **The proud have dug pits for me, which is not according to Your law:** The traps set for the psalmist were in fact directly against the **law** of God. Exo 21:33-34 gives the principle that a man is responsible for damage when he digs a pit.

i. The idea is that they hunted him as if he were a wild animal. "The manner of taking wild beasts was by 'digging pits,' and covering them over with turf, upon which when the beast trod, he fell into the pit, and was there confined and taken." (Horne)

ii. "Neither the men nor their pits were according to the divine law: they were cruel and crafty deceivers, and their pits were contrary to the Levitical law, and contrary to the command which bids us love our neighbour." (Spurgeon)

b. **All Your commandments are faithful; they persecute me wrongfully:** The psalmist found faithfulness and refuge in the **commandments** of God; this was strong contrast to the persecution he found from his enemies. In such times, he prayed the logical prayer: **Help me!**

i. "Many a time have these words been groaned out by troubled saints, for they are such as suit a thousand conditions of need, pain, distress, weakness, and sin. 'Help, Lord,' will be a fitting prayer for youth and age, for labour and suffering, for life and death. No other help is sufficient, but God's help is all-sufficient and we cast ourselves upon it without fear." (Spurgeon)

4. (87-88) *Revived by God unto obedience.*

**They almost made an end of me on earth,
But I did not forsake Your precepts.
Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.**

a. **They almost made an end of me on earth, but I did not forsake Your precepts:** The point is emphasized through repetition. *Nothing* would make the psalmist **forsake** God's word. He would cling to it in good times and in bad times.

i. There are many things that may cause a person to **forsake** the word of God in one way or another.

- Sinful compromise.
- Intellectual arrogance.
- Mocking and persecution.
- Coldness of heart.
- Worldly distractions.
- Love of material things.
- Chosen or allowed busyness.

ii. Here, the psalmist was *almost dead* (**they almost made an end of me on earth**), yet he would not **forsake** the word of God.

iii. There is gold in that word "**almost**." It reminds us that though our foes (especially our spiritual adversaries) may press for our complete destruction, God will preserve us. He allows us to be attacked, yet at the same time He sets a limit to the success of the attackers. **Almost** is a word of God's gracious protection.

b. **Revive me according to Your lovingkindness:** The psalmist looked to God for new life, for *revival*. Yet he knew that this was not deserved, even by someone as in

love with God's word as he was. Instead, he prayed **Revive me according to Your lovingkindness**, not according to what he deserved or had earned.

i. "If we are revived in our own personal piety we shall be out of reach of our assailants. Our best protection from tempters and persecutors is more life." (Spurgeon)

ii. The psalmist spoke freely about his great love for God and His word. Yet his trust was in the goodness and grace and **lovingkindness** of God, not in his own love for God and His word.

c. So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth:

Here the psalmist understood the *purpose* of a revived spirit within him. It wasn't merely to enjoy a season of spiritual excitement; it was for a more faithful, obedient walk with God.

i. Many people look to revival as merely a time of heightened spiritual excitement that has little purpose other than giving people a sense of blessing and thrills. This mistaken idea of revival actually *hinders* the work of true revival.

ii. This revived life was also given for the sake of steadfastness to the **testimony of God's mouth**. "[Spiritual] life is absolutely essential to steadfastness in the truth. Whenever I hear of churches and ministers departing from the faith, I know that piety is at [a] low ebb among them. It is proposed that we should argue with them: it is of no avail to argue with dead people. It is proposed that we should bring out another book of Christian evidences: it is small benefit to provide glasses for those who have no eyes. What is wanted is more spiritual life; for as the truth quickens men, they love the quickening word, but

dead men care little about that which is to them a dead letter.” (Spurgeon)

d. **The testimony of Your mouth:** The psalmist rightly understood that the word of God actually came from the **mouth** of God. God used human authors, and those human authors expressed their personality through the inspired writings, yet God so directed those human authors that what they wrote could accurately be called words from the

mouth of God.

i. If the Bible gives us words from the **mouth** of God, we can confidently say that the Bible is *infallible*; that is, that in its original, autograph documents (of which we have extremely reliable copies), it is absolutely without error.

ii. Since the **mouth** communicates *words*, we also insist that the *words* of the Bible are infallible, and not merely the *ideas*. “To me there is no explanation of those words except that which involves verbal and infallible inspiration. The testimony of God’s mouth must be given in words: God’s heart has thoughts, but God’s mouth has words; and words from the omniscient and true God must be infallible.” (Spurgeon)

L. Lamed ? : Saved by the word settled in heaven.

1. (89-91) *A faithful God and His settled word.*

**Forever, O LORD,
Your word is settled in heaven.
Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
You established the earth, and it abides.
They continue this day according to Your ordinances,
For all are Your servants.**

a. **Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven:** The psalmist here meditated on the *unchanging nature* of God's word. Because it **is settled in heaven**, it will not change on earth.

i. The word **is settled in heaven**, not merely settled in the heart or mind of the psalmist. It is *objectively settled in heaven*, whether the psalmist or anyone else believes it to be or not to be. If someone were to say to the psalmist, "That's your opinion – that is good for you," he would object most strongly that God's word **is settled in heaven** quite apart from any opinion of man.

ii. It's not settled at Tübingen. It's not settled at Harvard. It's not settled at Heidelberg. It's not settled at Oxford. It's not settled at Paris. There is quite a debate at the seminaries these days! We care not for any of that when we know, **Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.**

iii. "If I can prove *a word* to have been spoken by God, I must no more question it than his own Being. It may seem to fail on earth; but *it is for ever settled in heaven.*" (Bridges)

iv. "After tossing about on a sea of trouble the Psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock. Jehovah's word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man's teachings change so often that there is never time for

them to be settled; but the Lord's word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally." (Spurgeon)

v. "Sentiments fluctuate so constantly in this nineteenth century that I suppose we shall soon require to have barometers to show us the variations of doctrine as well as the prospects of the weather. We shall have to consult quarterly reviews, to see what style of religious thought is predominant, and then we shall have to accommodate our sermons to the dictum of the last wise man who has chosen to make a special fool of himself. As for myself, I shall continue to be unfashionable, and abide where I am. 'Sticking in the mud,' says somebody. 'Standing on the Rock,' say I." (Spurgeon)

b. **Settled in heaven:** The psalmist also declared his belief that the word of God was exactly that – not the words of man, but the very words of God. He believed that the Scriptures come from **heaven** and not earth, from the **LORD** and not man.

i. The psalmist believed what the Apostle Paul wrote hundreds of years later in 2Ti 3:16 : *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

ii. This means something more than saying that God inspired the men who wrote Scripture, though we believe that He did; God also inspired the very words they wrote. We notice it doesn't say, "All Scripture writers are inspired by God," even though that is true. Yet that statement doesn't go far enough. *The words they wrote were breathed by God; **Your word is settled in heaven.***

iii. It isn't that God breathed into the human authors. That is true, but not what Paul wrote in 2Ti 3:16. He says that from **heaven**, God breathed out of them His holy word.

iv. We remember what Jesus said in Mat 5:18, *...one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled*. The *jot* refers to *yod* (?), the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet; it looks like half a letter. The *tittle* is a small mark in a Hebrew letter, somewhat like the crossing of a "t" or the tail on a "y."

- The difference between *bet* (?) and *kaf* (?) is a *tittle*.
- The difference between *dalet* (?) and *resh* (?) is a *tittle*.
- The difference between *vav* (?) and *zayin* (?) is a *tittle*.

v. These are small, tiny, almost insignificant differences – yet Jesus said that even these smallest differences would not pass away from God's word. He said that heaven and earth would sooner pass away than a *yod* or a tittle from the word of God. Truly, **Your word is settled in heaven.**

vi. Every preacher should *especially* be able to say, **Your word is settled in heaven.** Charles Spurgeon knew of some preachers who could *not* say that. "They say that they are thinking out their doctrines. I would be greatly sorry to have to think out the road to heaven without the guiding star of heaven's grace or the map of the word. Not gospel-preachers but gospel-makers these men aspire to be, and their message comes forth, not as the gospel of the grace of God, but as the gospel of the imagination of men; a

gospel concocted in their own kitchen, not taught them by the Holy Spirit. It is the reverse of being 'settled in heaven,' it is not even settled in the mind of its inventor."

c. **Your faithfulness endures to all generations:** The psalmist believed that the **settled** word of God was a demonstration of the **faithfulness** of God, and that **faithfulness** extends across **all generations**.

i. We recognize the truth of this when we look at **generations** past. We trace the line of the amazing faithfulness of God to each generation, despite the worst impulses and works of man.

ii. We recognize the truth of this when we consider **generations** present and future. The present and future often look gloomy; we wonder where the great men and women of God are who were seen in previous generations. Yet we should not fear; **Your faithfulness endures to all generations**.

iii. We recognize the truth of this when we consider how God has preserved His word through the **generations**. There are many great works of ancient literature that are lost; one author or another makes mention of them, but we have no text that has survived to our day. The Bible not only survives; it thrives.

iv. "Throughout much of this time, the Bible was an object of extreme hatred by many in authority. They tried to stamp it out, but the text survived. In the early days of the church, Celsus, Propyry, and Lucien tried to destroy it by their arguments. Later the emperors Diocletian and Julian tried to destroy it by force. In some periods of history it was a capital offense to possess a copy of the Bible. Yet the text survived." (Boice)

d. You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances:

The word of God itself (**Your ordinances**) is what established the earth and caused it to abide. The earth and all of creation began with a word from God (Genesis 1); it is no surprise that they are also sustained and endure **according to** the word of God.

- i. This gives new understanding to two wonderful statements of Scripture:

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever (Isa 40:8).

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away (Mat 24:35).

- ii. These passages put the word of God *outside the created world* and indicate that the word of God is more permanent and enduring than creation itself. Since the created world came into being by God's word and is sustained by His word, this makes perfect sense.

- iii. "He establishes the world and it abideth. Let us be confident then. Whenever God means to break his word and change his ordinances we may expect to find this earth go steaming into the sun, or else it will rush far off into space, nobody knows where. But while it keeps its place, what have you and I to worry about? Is it not the sign that the Lord will keep us also?" (Spurgeon)

e. For all are Your servants: The psalmist looked at the created order and understood that all creation ultimately serves God and His purpose. The **earth**, which He **established** and which **abides**, obeys His word.

- i. "There is constancy and order in all of creation, reflecting the 'faithfulness' of the Lord."

(VanGemeren)

ii. "A striking feature of these verses is the coupling of God's creative, world-sustaining word with His law for man. Both are the product of the same ordering mind; and not only men but 'all things' are His 'servants'." (Kidner)

2. (92-93) *The sustaining power of God's word.*

**Unless Your law *had been* my delight,
I would then have perished in my affliction.
I will never forget Your precepts,
For by them You have given me life.**

a. **Unless Your law had been my delight:** The psalmist rejoiced that the word of God had been his **delight**. Reading and studying and meditating on God's word were not burdensome; they were a **delight**.

i. We can speculate that one reason this was so was because *God met him in His word*. When we have fellowship with God in and through His word, it makes our time in His law delightful.

b. **I would then have perished in my affliction:** The psalmist knew that without his relationship with God and His word, he would not have been sustained in his season of **affliction**.

i. Again, it should be stressed that this **delight** goes beyond mere Bible knowledge. It is the relationship with God in and through His word that gives strength and spiritual nourishment.

ii. "What got him through his afflictions was his lifelong habit of reading, marking, learning, meditating upon, spiritually digesting, and above all obeying God's Law." (Boice)

iii. "'Thy law...my delights...in mine affliction.' I happened to be standing in a grocer's shop one day in a large manufacturing town in the west of Scotland, when a poor, old, frail widow came in to make a few purchases. There never was, perhaps, in that town a more severe time of distress. Nearly every loom was stopped. Decent and respectable tradesmen who had seen better days, were obliged to subsist on public charity. So much money per day (but a trifle at most) was allowed to the really poor and deserving. The poor widow had received her daily pittance, and she had now come into the shop of the grocer to lay it out to the best advantage. She had but a few coppers in her withered hands. Carefully did she expend her little stock – a pennyworth of this and the other necessary of life nearly exhausted all she had. She came to the last penny, and with a singular expression of heroic contentment and cheerful resignation on her wrinkled face, she said, '

Now I must buy oil with this, that I may see to read my Bible during these long dark nights, for it is my only comfort now when every other comfort has gone away.'" (Alexander Wallace, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life:** The psalmist remembered the *life-giving* power and character of God's word. It was this **life** that strengthened him in the season of **affliction**.

i. God's word brings **life** because it *is* alive. "The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me. The Bible is not antique or modern. It is eternal." (Luther, cited in Boice)

3. (94-95) *Safety in seeking God's word.*

**I am Yours, save me;
For I have sought Your precepts.
The wicked wait for me to destroy me,
But I will consider Your testimonies.**

a. **I am Yours, save me:** This speaks of the wonderful relationship between the psalmist and His God, flowing from the word of God.

- He recognized that God was his God.
- He recognized that salvation was not in Himself.
- He recognized that God hears and answers prayer.
- He recognized that God would indeed save him.
 - i. "We are the Lord's by creation, election, redemption, surrender, and acceptance; and hence our firm hope and assured belief that he will save us. A man will surely save his own child: Lord, save *me*." (Spurgeon)
 - ii. "But what a powerful plea for mercy may we draw from the Lord's interest in us! Will not a man be careful of his children, his treasure, his jewels? 'Such am I. Thy sovereign love hath bought me – made me *thine* – *I am thine; save me*.'" (Bridges)

b. **For I have sought Your precepts:** The basis of this confidence was a relationship built upon the word of God (**Your precepts**). This was not a relationship built upon feelings or subjective experiences, but upon the solid foundation of God's word.

- i. "But then let it be remembered, that no man can say to God with good conscience, 'I am thine,' unless he can also go on, and say, 'I have sought thy precepts.'" (Horne)

c. **The wicked wait for me to destroy me, but I will consider Your testimonies:** The psalmist speaks of his

enemies in an almost causal way. While they do their worst against him – they **wait for** him **to destroy** him – he will not panic, but find refuge in the word of God.

i. “If the enemy cannot cause us to withdraw our thoughts from holy study, or our feet from holy walking, or our hearts from holy aspirations, he has met with poor success in his assaults.” (Spurgeon)

4. (96) *The perfection of God’s word.*

**I have seen the consummation of all perfection,
But Your commandment is exceedingly broad.**

a. **I have seen the consummation of all perfection:**

The psalmist considered the excellent things he had seen in this world. Perhaps he thought of the things of great natural beauty...the small things of intricate creation...the beauty of human love and care. Yet, all these things have a **consummation** – in the sense of a limit or a barrier. The best things of this world only go so far.

i. “He has considered all the perfections of things other than Jehovah Himself, that is, of created things; and has discovered their limits.” (Morgan)

ii. “Of ‘all perfection’ in this world, whether of beauty, wit, learning, pleasure, honour, or riches, experience will soon show us the ‘end.’ But where is the end or boundary of the word of God?” (Horne)

b. **But Your commandment is exceedingly broad:**

Despite all the great and beautiful things of this world, something is greater still – the **commandment** of God, His revealed word to us. His word is not limited as the things, even the great things, of this earth are.

- His word is before creation.
- His word is the sustainer of creation.
- His word will endure beyond all creation.

i. "He has found that stretching out beyond them, and enwrapping them all is the commandment of God." (Morgan)

ii. "This verse could well be a summary of Ecclesiastes, where every earthly enterprise has its day and comes to nothing, and where only in God and His commandments do we get beyond these frustrating limits." (Kidner)

iii. "*Broad*, or *large*, both for extent and for continuance; it is useful to all persons in all times and conditions, and for all purposes to inform, direct, quicken, comfort, sanctify, and save men; it is of everlasting truth and efficacy; it will never deceive or forsake those who trust it, as all worldly things will, but will make men happy both here and for ever." (Poole)

iv. Strangely, many today think that the Bible is *narrow*. They think of themselves as **exceedingly broad**-minded people; yet they show little tolerance for those who disagree with *them*. God's word is indeed **exceedingly broad**, and it will make us broad-minded, broad-hearted, and tolerant in the best sense, if we read and obey it. God's word will prevent us from being tyrants over others and will teach us to tolerate and love others even when their lives and thinking are decidedly against God and His word.

v. This **broad** place is a firm and safe foundation for us. "Give me the plenary, verbal theory of biblical inspiration with all its difficulties, rather than the doubt. I accept the difficulties and I humbly wait for their solution. But while I wait, I am standing on rock." (J.C. Ryle, Anglican Bishop cited in Boice)

M. Mem ? : Loving the sweetness of God's word.

"This is a pure song of praise. It contains no single petition, but is just one glad outpouring of the heart." (Morgan)

1. (97) *The love of God's word expressed through meditation.*

Oh, how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day.

a. **Oh, how I love Your law:** Twice before in this psalm, the writer has declared his love for the word of God (verses 47-48). Yet here, the phrasing is more passionate. His devotion to God and His word has built a love-relationship between the psalmist and God's word.

i. It isn't "I used to love Your law," or "One day I will love Your law." He describes how he feels about the word of God *right now*. He also speaks for himself; the psalmist isn't saying how others should feel, but about how *he* feels.

ii. We also notice that he says, "**Oh, how I love Your law!**" The word **how** describes a comparison; the psalmist loves the word of God *more than* other things. "It is a word of admiration, or a note of comparison; so is it taken in divers other places...it noteth a kind of excess or excellency, even such as cannot be well expressed. The prophet seemeth to speak with a kind of sighing, as being so ravished with love towards the law of God, that he was even sick of love." (Thomas Stoughton, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "The Order of the Divine mind, embodied in the Divine Law, is beautiful.... It is the language of a man ravished by moral beauty. If we cannot at all share his experience, we shall be the losers." (C.S. Lewis from *Reflections on the Psalms*, cited in Boice)

iv. The superficial Christian may read and understand and even, in an outward sense, obey the word of

God. But only the spiritual man *loves* it; he lives as if he could not live without the word of God. To the superficial Christian it is a duty to satisfy the conscience; to the believer it is food and medicine, light and comfort – the word of God is life.

v. If you desire to, you can increase your love for God's word. You can't *make* yourself love something or someone; but you *can* cultivate love toward someone or something.

- Give it your time; set it before you constantly.
- Give it your attention and care; *look after* the word of God (**it is my meditation all the day**).
- Give it a truly *listening* ear.
- Give it your honor and your obedience.
- Give it your appreciation; value it for all the good it has done for you and be thankful for all that good.
- Give it your dependence and trust; let it care for you.
- Give it your praise; speak highly of it before others.

vi. When we truly love someone, we don't wish to *change* him. "You cannot bend the Bible to your mind; how much better it would be for you to bend your mind to the Bible, and to say, 'O how I love thy law, – the doctrines of it, the precepts of it, the promise of it, the ordinances it enjoins upon me, the warnings it sets before me, the exhortations it gives me!' Love the whole Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, and be prepared even to die rather than to give up half a verse of it." (Spurgeon)

vii. "I beseech you to let your Bibles be everything to you. Carry this matchless treasure with you

continually, and read it, and read it, and read it again and again. Turn to its pages by day and by night. Let its narratives mingle with your dreams; let its precepts color your lives; let its promises cheer your darkness, let its divine illumination make glad your life. As you love God, love this Book which is the Book of God, and the God of books, as it has rightly been called." (Spurgeon)

b. **It is my meditation all the day:** Because the psalmist loved God's word, it was natural and expected that he would think about it often. A lover finds it easy to think about, to meditate upon, the one he loves.

i. "*My meditations*; the matter of my constant and most diligent study..." (Poole)

ii. "He meditated in God's word because he loved it, and then loved it the more because he meditated in it." (Spurgeon)

iii. When we love the Bible, we find much to meditate on.

- The Bible is a letter from our distant Father.
- The Bible is a picture of our best and most faithful Friend.
- The Bible is the certificate of our adoption into the family of God.
- The Bible is the declaration of our liberty, our freedom from slavery.
- The Bible is the description of our heavenly inheritance.
- The Bible is the evidence of our nobility, for we are made kings and priests by God.

- The Bible is the instruction manual for wise and blessed living.
- The Bible is both a statement of our account, and a checkbook for what belongs to us by the promises of God.
- The Bible is a telescope where we see the heavenly city that is our destination.

2. (98-100) *God's word gives great wisdom.*

You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies;

For they *are* ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers,

For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

I understand more than the ancients,

Because I keep Your precepts.

a. **You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies:** The psalmist had many enemies, some of them evil and some proud. Perhaps the proud ones boasted that they were **wiser** or more educated than the writer of the psalm. Yet the writer was confident that God's word had given him greater wisdom.

i. The psalmist is wiser and has more understanding than his enemies (verse 98), his teachers (verse 99), and the ancients (verse 100). "The comparison is not a prideful assertion of superiority, but a form of exultation in the Lord himself, whose wisdom is more direct and superior." (VanGemeran)

b. **For they are ever with me:** The psalmist was real about the abiding presence of his enemies. They were with him **ever**, and he had to gain enough spiritual strength and enough strength of character to survive and even thrive with them **with** him.

i. "Neither grace received, nor experience attained, nor engagements regarded, will secure me for one moment without continual teaching from thyself."
(Bridges)

c. **I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation:** Here the psalmist explained why he was **wiser than** his enemies. He even had more **understanding** than **all** his **teachers** (who, we hope were not the same as his previously mentioned **enemies**) because of his serious study and **meditation** on God's word.

i. This verse teaches us that it is vitally important to have **understanding**, even great **understanding**. We know this because of the value the psalmist places on having **more understanding**.

ii. This verse teaches us that it is not wrong or bad to have **teachers**, because the psalmist indeed had (either now or in the past) **teachers** who taught him about life and God's word. This verse is *not* a renunciation of those teachers.

iii. This verse teaches us that our **understanding** of God's word and ways is not limited to what we receive from our **teachers**. We can learn from our own study and **meditation**; teachers are often helpful but not absolutely necessary. **Understanding** is necessary; **teachers** may or may not be.

iv. This verse teaches us that this **understanding** does not come easily; true **meditation** involves some element of work. It requires the ability to stay focused and the necessary tools for Biblical understanding and analysis.

v. This principle has been proven in the lives of God's servants again and again. The Bible tells us of men

who were not educated by the world's standards (such as the disciples, as in Act 4:13) yet they had great **understanding** and were effective in serving God.

vi. This principle has also been proven in the lives of God's servants since Bible times. Notable examples of men greatly used without the accepted educational credentials of their day include Charles Spurgeon, D.L. Moody, William Carey, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Hudson Taylor.

vii. God has also used many who were greatly educated. Moses, Daniel, and Paul are all Biblical examples. Augustine, Martin Luther, and Billy Graham are just a few historical examples. It's just as wrong to think that formal education *disqualifies* someone for effective service as it is to think that it automatically qualifies someone for effective service.

viii. "We may hear the wisest teachers and remain fools, but if we meditate upon the sacred word we must become wise. There is more wisdom in the testimonies of the Lord than in all the teachings of men if they were all gathered into one vast library. The one book outweighs all the rest." (Spurgeon)

ix. "It is no reflection upon my teachers, but rather an honour to them, for me to improve so as to excel them, and no longer to need them." (Matthew Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

d. **I understand more than the ancients, because I keep your precepts:** The psalmist was even more bold than just saying that God's word had given him an education greater than his **teachers**. Now he says "**I understand more than the ancients.**"

i. "He understands more than the aged, that is, the direct keeping of the Divine precepts is of more value than the advice of others, even though they have had long experience." (Morgan)

ii. This is particularly meaningful when we realize how highly regarded the wisdom of **the ancients** was in that day and culture. In the modern world it is all too common to disregard the wisdom and understanding of the ancients, but not in the psalmist's time.

iii. This also tells us that while we should in general respect the understanding and wisdom of **the ancients** (which the psalmist surely did, in general), *we are not slaves to their wisdom and understanding*. Our rule for faith and doctrine and living is the Bible itself, not the understanding or interpretation of it from even the great men of history.

iv. "The ancients are held in high repute, but what did they all know compared with that which we perceive in the divine precepts? 'The old is better' says one: but the oldest of all is the best of all, and what is that but the word of the Ancient of days." (Spurgeon)

v. James Montgomery Boice told a story about the life of Harry Ironside, the pastor, author, and Bible commentator. Ironside went to visit a man near death, who was suffering from tuberculosis. The man was almost dead and could barely speak. As Ironside spoke to him he asked, "Young man, you are trying to preach Christ, are you not?" Ironside said that he was, and the man replied: "Well, sit down a little, and let us talk together about the Word of God." Then the man opened his Bible and spoke with Ironside until his strength was gone; he shared insights from the Bible that Ironside had not appreciated or even seen before. Ironside was stunned, and he asked the man:

"Where did you get these things? Can you tell me where I can find a book that will open them up to me? Did you get them in seminary or college?" The old man replied: "My dear young man, I learned these things on my knees on the mud floor of a little sod cottage in the north of Ireland. There with my open Bible before me, I used to kneel for hours at a time and ask the Spirit of God to reveal Christ to my soul and to open the Word to my heart. He taught me more on my knees on that mud floor than I ever could have learned in all the seminaries or colleges in the world."

3. (101-102) *The word of God keeps one from evil.*

**I have restrained my feet from every evil way,
That I may keep Your word.**

**I have not departed from Your judgments,
For You Yourself have taught me.**

a. **I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word:** The psalmist understood that restraining himself from evil would also help him understand God's word better. He could better **keep** God's word by staying away from **every evil way**.

i. "There is no treasuring up the holy word unless there is a casting out of all unholiness: if we keep the good word we must let go the evil." (Spurgeon)

b. **I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me:** The personal connection the psalmist had with God through His word *encouraged* a faithful walk.

i. This also demonstrates that God can teach the believer through His word in a direct sense – **You Yourself have taught me**. This does not mean that *everything* one comes to through self-study is correct

or from God, and it does not eliminate the need for Bible teachers. Yet it does fulfill what Jesus later said in Joh 16:13 : *...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.*

ii. **You Yourself have taught me:** "The word *thou* [**You**] is emphatic. Here is the guarantor of biblical truth, and the One who alone opens the disciple's eyes to see it." (Kidner)

4. (103-104) *The sweet understanding from the word of God.*

**How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.**

a. **How sweet are Your words to my taste:** The psalmist felt the word of God was as pleasant to him as **sweet** things – even **sweeter than honey**! Time spent in God's word was not an unpleasant duty; it was a **sweet** experience to be thankful for.

i. **How sweet:** "He expresses the fact of their sweetness, but as he cannot express the degree of their sweetness he cries, '*How sweet!*'" (Spurgeon)

ii. "The study and obedience of thy words yields me more satisfaction and delight than any worldly men find in their sensual pleasures." (Poole)

iii. The psalmist had very little of God's word – perhaps just the five books of Moses and a few books more. We have so much more riches and sweetness in the word of God than he did; yet most of us seem to value it less.

iv. The Bible is filled with passage after passage that anyone with spiritual sensitivity would find **sweet**. Passages like Psa 23:1-3, Psa 8:1, Joh 3:16,

Rom 8:28, or Rev 22:20 are just a sample. "If you can't find anything beautiful or sweet in these verses, your taste buds are terribly dulled and your eyes horribly glazed by the tawdry glitz of our culture." (Boice)

v. "For what argument could ever persuade us that honey is bitter, at the moment we are tasting its sweetness?" (Bridges)

vi. "If the word of God be not very sweet to me, have I an appetite? Solomon says, 'The full soul loatheth a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet' [Pro 27:7]. Ah, when a soul is full of itself, and of the world, and of the pleasures of sin, I do not wonder that it sees no sweetness in Christ, for it has no appetite!" (Spurgeon)

vi. "It is a blessed sign of grace in the heart when God's words are sweet to us as a whole, – when we love the truth, not cast into a system or a shape, but as we find it in God's word. I believe that no man who has yet lived has ever proposed a system of theology which comprises all the truth of God's word. If such a system had been possible, the discovery of it would have been made for us by God himself: – certainly it would if it had been desirable and useful for our profit and holiness. But it has not pleased God to give us a body of divinity; let us receive it as he has given it, each truth in its own proportion, – each doctrine in harmony with its fellow, – each precept carefully carried out into practice, and each promise to be believed, and by-and-by received. Let the truth, and the whole truth, be sweet to our taste." (Spurgeon)

b. Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way: The understanding gained by the psalmist gave him

discernment and the power to persevere and **hate every false way**.

i. Notably, the psalmist began this section with love; he ends it with **hate**. "The Christian life is not all sweetness.... It has its sweet moments, and there is incomparable beauty in God. But we still live in a sour, ugly world, and it is equally important to learn to hate evil as well as love the good." (Boice)

N. Nun ? : Never-ending confidence in God's word.

1. (105) *The illuminating guidance of God's word.*

**Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.**

a. **Your word is a lamp to my feet:** The psalmist walked the road of life, the **word** of God made his steps clear. He would not know where to step without the guidance of God's word.

i. It is possible to walk the path of life without knowing where our steps will fall. We don't know if our foot will step on good ground or dangerous ground; we are not self-aware. God's **word** can be a **lamp** to our feet.

ii. Simply said, the Bible should help us walk the way God wants us to walk. Think of all the different words we use to clarify walking: stroll, saunter, amble, trudge, plod, dawdle, hike, tramp, tromp, slog, stomp, march, stride, sashay, glide, troop, patrol, wander, ramble, tread, prowl, promenade, roam, traipse, mosey, and perambulate. The different words show that there are many different ways to walk, and each of them says something.

iii. How are Christians to walk?

- Worthy (Eph 4:1).

- Uprightly (Isa 57:2).
- In the light (1Jn 1:7).
- Humbly (Mic 6:8).

None of these are possible without the word of God lighting our way.

iv. The picture of a **lamp** says something. "Thus is our passage in a dark and perilous way irradiated by the *lamp and light of the word*. But except *the lamp* be lighted – except the teaching of the Spirit accompany *the word*, all is darkness – thick darkness. Let us not be content to read *the word* without obtaining some *light* from it in our understanding." (Bridges)

b. **A light to my path:** The word of God not only showed the psalmist where his feet stepped, but also the **path** he should remain upon. It showed him the next few steps to take.

i. We need the Bible to teach us right from wrong. We certainly do have some inner sense of this in our conscience; but our conscience can be weak, ignorant, or damaged. The word of God is higher even than our conscience, and it teaches our conscience.

ii. "This is not convenient guidance for one's career, but truth for moral choices; see, for example, the kind of 'snare' and 'straying' that are implied in 119:110." (Kidner)

iii. "One of the most practical benefits of Holy Writ is guidance in the acts of daily life." (Spurgeon)

c. **Your word is a lamp...and a light:** These pictures show us that the word of God is **light** and brings **light**; it doesn't make things darker or harder to understand. It is a **light** book, not a dark book.

i. "This stanza emphasizes the clarity of Scripture, the attribute of the Bible that meant so much to the Protestant Reformers, who also called it perspicuity. What they meant by clarity of perspicuity is that the Bible is basically comprehensible to any open-minded person who reads it." (Boice)

ii. Not all parts of Scripture are equally clear or easy to understand; it is helpful to have wisdom from others in what they have seen in the Scriptures. Yet at its core, the Bible can be understood, and Christians *do* understand it. Think of all the common ground Christians, even of greatly different denominations, have together:

- The truth of a Triune God.
- The truth of the full deity and full humanity of Jesus.
- The truth of our sin.
- The truth of Jesus' death for us to save us from sin and death.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in leading us to faith.
- The establishment of the church, the community of believers.
- The return of Jesus Christ.
- The resurrection of the dead.

Taken together, these are a lot! In general, Christians *do* agree in their understanding of the Bible.

iii. This doesn't mean that someone's opinion on the meaning of a Bible passage is just as good as everyone else's opinion. It is really just the opposite; the Bible is clear enough to be understood, and this means that some so-called understandings are wrong.

2. (106-108) *Trusting the life-giving power of God's word.*

I have sworn and confirmed

That I will keep Your righteous judgments.

I am afflicted very much;

Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.

Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,

And teach me Your judgments.

a. **I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments:** The psalmist showed a *determination of life* to obey the word of God. It was a double-decision, both **sworn and confirmed**.

i. **I have sworn and confirmed:** Bridges tells of a man named Pearce, who read a book titled *Rise and Progress of Religion*. From it, he decided that he would live a more dedicated and obedient life. He wrote out a covenant with God, and in a very serious and solemn way, he even signed it with his own blood. It wasn't long until he started failing in his commitment to the covenant – first in small ways and then more and more. This plunged him into deep distress, almost to total despair. Then he considered that the arrangement he had made with God was actually legalistic and pharisaical, especially in the way that it relied on the power of his own vows and resolutions. So he took the covenant to the top of his house, tore it into small pieces, and threw it to the wind. He did not feel himself free from the promises themselves, only now he was of a mind to not rely on himself or his own vows, but only on the blood of Jesus Christ and the indwelling power of His Spirit. This led to a much better result, and he was close to the source of comfort and restoration when he did fail.

b. **I am afflicted very much; revive me, O LORD, according to Your word:** His determination to be obedient came from a season of affliction, not comfort and ease. Despite his many problems and pains, he looked to God's word for a reviving of life, and for this to happen **according to His word.**

i. "The faithful servants of God may be 'afflicted'; they may be 'very much' and grievously afflicted: but let them consider, that, by afflictions, their corruptions are purged away, their faith is tried, their patience is perfected, their brethren are edified, and their Master is glorified." (Horne)

c. **Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of my mouth:** The psalmist presented these words to the LORD as if they were a sacrifice brought to an altar. They were **freewill offerings** meant to show his love and devotion to God.

i. "God's revenues are not derived from forced taxation, but from freewill donation. There can be no acceptance where there is no willingness; there is no work of free grace where there is no fruit of free will." (Spurgeon)

d. **And teach me Your judgments:** It is very easy for us to have a sinful confidence in our own judgment – to simply "follow my heart." Yet Spurgeon wrote well: "These repeated cries for teaching show the humility of the man of God, and also discover to us our own need of similar instruction. Our judgment needs educating till it knows, agrees with, and acts upon, the judgments of the Lord."

3. (109-110) *Trusting God's word despite danger.*

**My life is continually in my hand,
Yet I do not forget Your law.**

**The wicked have laid a snare for me,
Yet I have not strayed from Your precepts.**

a. **My life is continually in my hand, yet I do not forget Your law:** The psalmist's life was often in danger, yet his connection to the word of God stayed strong.

b. **The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not strayed from Your precepts:** The dangers came from determined enemies, who were **wicked** people. Yet he would not forsake the **precepts** of God.

i. "From this verse let us learn to be on our guard, for we, too, have enemies both crafty and wicked. Hunters set their traps in the animals' usual runs, and our worst snares are laid in our own ways. By keeping to the ways of the Lord we shall escape the snares of our adversaries, for his ways are safe and free from treachery." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Whenever we find the psalms talking about danger, we usually think of physical danger.... But the psalms also speak of spiritual dangers like falling into sin or forgetting God." (Boice)

4. (111-112) An enduring commitment to God and His word.

**Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever,
For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.
I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes
Forever, to the very end.**

a. **Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart:** The psalmist rejoiced in God's word with a deep heart-felt joy. Therefore, the **testimonies** became his **heritage forever**.

i. "What is the psalmist's spiritual heritage, that is, what is he looking toward and working for? Some heavenly reward? A word of praise from God? Surprisingly, he says that his heritage is what he has been speaking about all along: God's Word itself." (Boice)

ii. How do the **testimonies** of God belong to us? "How did he claim an interest in them? Not by purchase, or by merit, it was his *heritage*.... Man looks at his *heritage*. 'This land – this estate – or this kingdom is mine.' The child of God looks round on the universe – on both worlds – on God himself with his infinite perfections – and says, 'All things are mine.' My title is more sure than to any earthly *heritage*." (Bridges)

iii. "I take possession of my *heritage*, I live on it, I live in it, it is my treasure, my portion. If a man is known by his *heritage*, let me be known by mine." (Bridges)

iv. "*Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage*. To these he was *heir*; he had *inherited* them from his fathers, and he was determined to leave them to his *family* for ever. If a man can leave nothing to his child but a *Bible*, in that he bequeaths him the greatest treasure in the universe." (Clarke)

b. **I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end:** The theme is once again emphasized. The psalmist would never forsake God's word – never stop reading, learning, meditating, and especially obeying it.

i. "Observe where he begins his work – not with the eye – the ear – the tongue – but with *the heart*." (Bridges)

ii. "The whole movement ends with a declaration which must be read in the light of the opening affirmation, and the following experience and need. It is that of complete abandonment to the will of God...even unto the end." (Morgan)

iii. The believer feels that every step is dangerous; this is why he cried out for the lamp to his feet and the light to his path. With every step dangerous, how can he ever hope to endure **forever, to the very end**? He can, because the same God who lights and sustains him for one step can do it for every step, **to the very end**.

O. Samek ? : Held up and supported by the word of God.

The fifteenth letter, Samek, denotes a proper pillar, and this agrees well with the subject matter of the strophe, in which God is twice implored to uphold his servant (119:116,117). (Neal and Littledale, cited in Spurgeon)

1. (113-114) Protection found in the word of God.

**I hate the double-minded,
But I love Your law.
You are my hiding place and my shield;
I hope in Your word.**

a. **I hate the double-minded, but I love Your law:**

The psalmist knew the frustration of dealing with those who were **double-minded**. They were uncertain and uncommitted in their lives. In contrast, the **law** of God is sure and certain.

i. "*Double-minded* is akin to the word in Elijah's taunt at those who hobbled 'first on one leg and then on the other' (1Ki 18:21, Jerusalem Bible)." (Kidner)

ii. "Double-minded people are people who know about God but are not fully determined to worship and

serve him only. They are those who want both God and the world. They want the benefits of true religion, but they want their sin too.... The Psalmist hates this double-mindedness; he also hates it in himself." (Boice)

iii. **But I love Your law:** "When we love the law it becomes a law of love, and we cling to it with our whole heart." (Spurgeon)

b. **You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word:** The God the psalmist knew so well through His word became a refuge in troubled times. The **hope** he had in the **word** of God was not initiated by mere academic or intellectual knowledge; it was founded on a relationship with and security in God Himself (**my hiding place and my shield**).

i. A good hiding place has strength, height, concealment, and reliability. Jesus is our *safe-room* or *panic-room*.

ii. "There is a time in which I may be called to *suffer in secret*; then thou *hidest me*. There may be a time in which thou callest me to *fight*; then thou art my *Shield and Protector*." (Clarke)

iii. "This is an experiential verse, and it testifies to that which the writer knew of his own personal knowledge: he could not fight with his own thoughts, or escape from them, till he flew to his God, and then he found deliverance. Observe that he does not speak of God's word as being his double defence, but he ascribes that to God himself." (Spurgeon)

2. (115) *A word to the wicked.*

**Depart from me, you evildoers,
For I will keep the commandments of my God!**

a. **Depart from me, you evildoers:** In a rare departure in his ongoing conversation with God about His word, the psalmist here addressed the **evildoers** that brought him such trouble. He knew that the best remedy was to put space between him and these **evildoers**, so he boldly told them, "**Depart from me.**"

i. The psalmist was careful in the choosing of his friends. As it has been said, "Show me your friends, and I will show you your future."

ii. "Every man will insensibly contract the good or bad qualities of the company which he keeps; and should, therefore, be careful to keep such as will make him wiser and better, and fit him for the goodly fellowship of saints and angels." (Horne)

iii. "Not that we would indulge morose or ascetic seclusion. We are expressly enjoined to courtesy and kindness (1Pe 3:8); to that wise and considerate 'walk towards them that are without' (Col 4:5), which 'adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour' (Tit 2:10), and indeed in some instances has been more powerful even than the word itself (Compare 1Pe 3:1-2), to 'win souls to Christ.' But when they would tempt us to a devious or backsliding step – when our connexion with them entices us to a single act of conformity to their standard, dishonourable to God, and inconsistent with our profession – then we must take a bold and unflinching stand." (Bridges)

b. **For I will keep the commandments of my God:** This is *why* he wanted space between him and the **evildoers**. He was committed to obedience, to keeping the **commandments** of God.

i. The second line of this verse very much connects with the first line. "Since he found it hard to keep the commandments in the company of the ungodly, he

gave them their marching orders. He *must* keep the commandments, but he did not need to keep their company.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Jesus demonstrated the same spirit when He steadfastly resisted the devil while being tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4). He told the devil to go away (Mat 4:10) and repeatedly relied on the word of God (Mat 4:4; Mat 4:7; Mat 4:10).

iii. “The word *God* only occurs in this one place in all this lengthened Psalm, and then it is attended by the personal word ‘*my*’ – ‘my God.’” (Spurgeon)

3. (116-117) *Held up and supported by the word of God.*

**Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live;
And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.
Hold me up, and I shall be safe,
And I shall observe Your statutes continually.**

a. **Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live:** The psalmist knew that he could not stand before his enemies without God holding him up. Without this continual support from God, he could not **live** – either physically or spiritually.

i. His idea was that this support (**Uphold me**) would come **according to** God’s **word**. It would be *consistent* with God’s word and *find its source* in God’s word.

ii. “In the Middle Ages, under the monastic order of the Benedictines, when a novice’s period of preparation was ended and he was ready to become attached to the monastery for life, there was an induction ceremony in which, with outstretched arms, the novice recited Psa 119:116 three times.... The community repeated the words and then sang the Gloria Patri, which was a way of acknowledging that

the commitments of the monastic life could only be sustained by God, to whom all glory belongs.” (Boice)

b. **Do not let me be ashamed of my hope:** The psalmist could pray this because he had his **hope** properly set. It was set upon God and His word (verses 43, 49, 74, 81, and 114). When our **hope** is so set, we can ask God to protect and vindicate us.

c. **Hold me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall observe Your statutes continually:** This is the second request in this brief section for support from God, and especially through His word. In receiving this support and security, the psalmist would use it for further obedience to God.

i. This constant dependence upon God – the constant prayer, “**Hold me up, and I shall be safe**” – will in fact keep one safe.

4. (118-120) The righteous judgment of God.

**You reject all those who stray from Your statutes,
For their deceit *is* falsehood.**

**You put away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross;
Therefore I love Your testimonies.**

**My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments.**

a. **You reject all those who stray from Your statutes:** The psalmist here speaks of the righteous judgment of God. He uses His word (**statutes**) as a measuring line for His judgment, rejecting **all those who stray** from His word and the principles revealed therein.

b. **You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross:** In His judgments, God has a purifying purpose and effect. He will cleanse the **earth** from the **wicked**,

treating them as impurities that need to be scraped away.

i. **Dross**: "The scum that forms on the top when a precious metal is being refined, is discarded by the metalsmith (cf. Isa 1:22; Jer 6:28-30; Eze 22:18-19).\" (VanGemeren)

ii. **Like dross**: Sin is really very much **like dross**.

- **Dross** takes away from the shine and glory of metal; it makes it dull.

- **Dross** is deceptive; it is not silver, but seems like it; it is not gold but seems like it.

- **Dross** is not made better by the fire.

- **Dross** is worthless. It has no value, no purpose.

- **Dross** is actually damaging to metal, because it can lead to rust. Metal with dross in it will be eaten away.

c. **Therefore I love Your testimonies**: The consideration of these righteous judgments made the psalmist praise God even more. He praised God and His word (**Your testimonies**) as righteous measures of judgment.

i. **Therefore I love Your testimonies**: "...because they take out the precious from the vile, and make men the same within as without.\" (Trapp)

d. **My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments**: As the psalmist considered the righteous judgments of God, he looked to his own life and understood that it was not entirely righteous. This sense of trembling **fear** would make him run to God for His atoning, covering sacrifice.

i. The psalmist didn't celebrate over the judgment on the wicked; it made him tremble in holy fear himself.

ii. "The presence of God is so real for the psalmist that he responds to his God in spirit and body. His life of obedience is lived in the presence of the living God, whereas the wicked act as if God does not see or care." (VanGemeren)

iii. "His best servants are not exempted from an awful dread, upon such occasions; scenes of this kind, shown in vision to the prophets, cause their flesh to quiver, and all their bones to shake." (Horne)

iv. "It is only as we tremble before the exalted and holy God that we will ever see the world and its distorted values to be the empty things they are. If we do not tremble before God, the world's system will seem wonderful to us and consume us pleasantly." (Boice)

P. Ayin ? : The servant seeks the word.

1. (121-122) A prayer for protection from the proud.

I have done justice and righteousness;

Do not leave me to my oppressors.

Be surety for Your servant for good;

Do not let the proud oppress me.

a. **I have done justice and righteousness:** As in other sections of this psalm, this is not a claim to sinless perfection. The psalmist is expressing confidence in the general **righteousness** of his life. The psalmist knew his life and the lives of his **oppressors**; he knew that his life was dedicated to God and theirs was not.

i. "Nor is this kind of pleading to be censured as self-righteous: when we are dealing with God as to our shortcomings, we use a very different tone from that with which we face the censures of our fellow-men; when they are in the question, and we are guiltless

towards them, we are justified in pleading our innocence." (Spurgeon)

ii. This confidence in his spiritual condition and his separation from those who *didn't* follow God is notable. The psalmist *knew* that his life was different from those who did not follow God. The difference was in more than theology; it was in life.

iii. Horne saw in these words something that Jesus could claim: "The Son of David might use the words in their full and absolute sense, and plead for a glorious resurrection, on the foot of his having performed a perfect obedience to the law."

b. **Be surety for Your servant for good:** The psalmist asked God to defend and stand up for him. It was only through God defending him that he could avoid the oppression of the proud.

i. "Take up my interests and weave them with thine own, and stand for me. As my Master, undertake thy servants' cause, and represent me before the faces of haughty men till they see what an august ally I have in the Lord my God." (Spurgeon)

ii. This provides evidence that his previous claim to **justice and righteousness** was not in an absolute sense. If he felt completely just and righteous before God, he would not have pleaded for God to stand as a **surety** for him – but he did. "Though upright before man, he ever felt himself a sinner before God." (Bridges)

iii. The psalmist cried out to God as Job did: *Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself (Job 17:3)*. The psalmist prayed that God would be to him what Jesus is to His people – a surety of the covenant (Heb 7:22).

iv. "...as Judah in the place of Benjamin – 'I will be surety of him: of mine hand shalt thou require him.' (Gen 43:9)" (Bridges)

v. "We should have been crushed beneath our proud adversary the devil if our Lord Jesus had not stood between us and the accuser, and become a surety for us." (Spurgeon)

c. **Do not let the proud oppress me:** Verse 22 is another rare verse in this psalm that does not mention the word of God in some way.

i. "According to the Masoretes, verse 122 is the only verse in the psalm that does not mention the Word of God. We have seen that verse 84 also seems not to mention it; verses 90, 121, and 132 may be examples too." (Boice)

ii. "The fact that the Bible is not mentioned here, in verse 122, may be an indication of the depth of mental anguish to which the psalmist fell as a result of the oppression he had endured from wicked men. For a moment his eyes seem to be off the Bible and on his fierce oppressors instead." (Boice)

2. (123-125) *The servant of God seeks salvation in His statutes.*

My eyes fail *from seeking* Your salvation

And Your righteous word.

Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy,

And teach me Your statutes.

I *am* Your servant;

Give me understanding,

That I may know Your testimonies.

a. **My eyes fail from seeking Your salvation and Your righteous word:** This was another indication of

how committed the psalmist was to the **word** of God, and how much he valued the **salvation** he found from it.

i. "He looked to God alone, he looked eagerly, he looked long, he looked till his eyes ached. The mercy is, that if our eyes fail, God does not fail, nor do *his* eyes fail." (Spurgeon)

ii. This waiting expectation shows us that *faith* came before *experience*. The psalmist was willing to have faith until the experience came. He would wait for God's salvation, and wait as long as it took.

b. Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy, and teach me Your statutes: The psalmist understood that when God teaches His people, it is evidence of His **mercy**. He has no inherent obligation to teach us; yet out of the merciful impulse of His heart, He does so.

c. I am Your servant; give me understanding: For the third time in four verses, the psalmist calls himself a **servant** of God. He understood that this meant he had obligations to God, and that God – as his Master – had obligations to him. Therefore he could ask for **understanding**.

i. "I have voluntarily hired myself unto thee, chosen the things that please thee, and taken hold of the covenant.... Now, this is all the wages I crave of thee, 'Give me understanding.'" (Trapp)

ii. "We may expect a master to teach his own servant the meaning of his own orders." (Spurgeon)

d. Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies: The psalmist wanted **understanding** – not so much to know the future or some hidden secrets of his soul or that of someone else's, but so that he would **know** the **testimonies** of God better.

- i. He believed that the word of God could be understood, with the help of God Himself.
- ii. He believed that **understanding** God's word was of great importance, because it would lead him into other wisdom and understanding of life.
- iii. "It is remarkable that the psalmist does not pray for understanding through acquiring knowledge, but begs of the Lord first that he may have the gracious gift of understanding, and then may obtain the desired instruction." (Spurgeon)

3. (126) *A plea for God to act.*

***It is time for You to act, O LORD,
For they have regarded Your law as void.***

a. **It is time for You to act, O LORD:** We admire the holy boldness of the psalmist. It almost seems rude for a man to tell God, **It is time for You to act.** Yet many who walk with God understand the desperate plea of the psalmist perfectly. He is so needy and dependent on God that it is good and right to make his request so boldly.

i. "The psalmist speaketh not as prescribing God a time, but as reminding him of his own glory and of his people's necessity." (Trapp)

ii. It is true that we don't know the ways of God's timing; many times, we have been wrong on this point. We have thought God must act *now*, when in His wisdom and glory He worked *later*. Yet all we can do is pray by what we can see; and when we see conditions as the psalmist saw, it is good for us to say, **It is time for You to act, O LORD.**

iii. "We might expect the writer to have said that God should act now because if he delays it will be too late; he will be crushed by his oppressors.... Here, instead of pleading his own desperate condition, he calls on

God to act because God's 'law is being broken'."
(Boice)

b. For they have regarded Your law as void:

Prompting the bold plea was the observation that many disregarded the word and **law** of God. In such times – when every man does what is right in his own eyes (Jdg 21:25) – it is proper for the people of God to plead for Him to **act**.

i. "The 'law' of God is 'made void' by those who deny its authority, or its obligation; by those who render it of none effect, through their traditions or their lives."
(Horne)

ii. "To persist in *making void the law* after so magnificent an exhibition of Almighty *working* – must it not expose the transgressors to reap the fruit of their own obstinacy, and to prepare to meet him as their Judge, whom they refuse to receive as their Saviour?" (Bridges)

4. (127-128) *The word of God is precious and right.*

Therefore I love Your commandments

More than gold, yes, than fine gold!

Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things

I consider to be right;

I hate every false way.

a. Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold: Though others regarded the word of God as void, the psalmist decided to love His **commandments** all the more in response. He valued them **more than gold** – even more **than fine gold**.

i. The psalmist remembered what kind of men considered the word of God as *void*. When he considered the monstrous men who had been enemies of God's word – men in our own age like

Stalin, Hitler, Mao – he knew that the word of God was lovely.

ii. “I like them better because they slight them, and prize that way the more they persecute. I kindle myself from their coldness.” (Trapp)

iii. “...*above solid gold*; gold separated from the dross, perfectly *refined*.” (Clarke)

iv. “Should I not *love* [**Your commandments**]? Can *gold, yea, fine gold*, offer to me blessings such as these? Can it heal my broken heart? Can it give relief to my wounded spirit? Has it any peace or prospect of comfort for me on my death bed?” (Bridges)

b. Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right: With great confidence, the psalmist proclaimed the inerrancy of God’s word. It was **right**, not wrong; and it was right **concerning all things**.

- When the Bible gives us history, it is **right** and true; the events actually happened as described.
- When the Bible gives us poetry, it is **right** and true; the feeling and experiences were real for the writer and ring true to human experience.
- When the Bible gives us prophecy, it is **right** and true; the events described will or have already come to pass, just as it is written.
- When the Bible gives us instruction, it is **right** and true; it truly does tell us the will of God and the best way of life.
- When the Bible tells us of God, it is **right** and true; it reveals to us what the nature and heart and mind of God are, as much as we can comprehend.

c. **I hate every false way:** Because the psalmist loved and trusted the word of God so much, he naturally hated **every false way**. He could not love the truth without also hating lies.

i. As Jesus said, *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other* (

Mat 6:24).

ii. "We cannot love the right path without hating the wrong ones.... Are you willing to hate what God hates? If not, you will never learn to love God truly, and you will certainly never walk in the way that brings true blessing." (Boice)

iii. And significantly, he hated **every false way**, not just some of them. "If Satan get a grip of thee by any one sin, is it not enough to carry thee to damnation? As the butcher carries the beast to the slaughter, sometime bound by all the four feet, and sometime by one only; so it is with Satan. Though thou be not a slave to all sin; if thou be a slave to one, the grip he hath of thee, by that one sinful affection, is sufficient to captive thee." (William Cowper, cited in Spurgeon)

Q. Pe ? : Steps directed by God's wonderful word.

1. (129) *Obeying the wonderful testimonies of God.*

**Your testimonies are wonderful;
Therefore my soul keeps them.**

a. **Your testimonies are wonderful:** The psalmist again declared his wonder and pleasure in the word of God. It was a continuing source of fascination to him.

i. "The word 'wonderful' is equivalent to our use of the word miraculous. These testimonies are supernatural, superhuman." (Morgan)

ii. The **testimonies** are supernatural in their nature, being free from error. They are supernatural in their effects, as they instruct, elevate, strengthen, and comfort the soul.

iii. "Jesus the eternal Word is called Wonderful, and all the uttered words of God are wonderful in their degree. Those who know them best wonder at them most. It is wonderful that God should have borne testimony at all to sinful men, and more wonderful still that his testimony should be of such a character, so clear, so full, so gracious, so mighty." (Spurgeon)

iv. "There is a height, length, depth, and breadth in thy word and testimonies that are truly astonishing; and on this account my soul loves them, and I deeply study them. The more I study, the more light and salvation I obtain." (Clarke)

v. "Let us not enter into the *testimonies*, as a dry task, or an ordinary study; but let us concentrate our minds, our faith, humility, and prayer, in a more devoted contemplation of them." (Bridges)

b. **Therefore my soul keeps them:** The enduring, abiding delight he had in the word of God prompted greater obedience. This was obedience in more than outward action; it was obedience in **soul**.

i. "Holy admiration of the *testimonies* will kindle spiritual devotedness to them – *Therefore doth my soul keep them.*" (Bridges)

2. (130-131) *Receiving the light-giving word.*

**The entrance of Your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple.
I opened my mouth and panted,
For I longed for Your commandments.**

a. **The entrance of Your words gives light:** The psalmist repeated a previous idea, that God's word brought **light** to him. His **words** made things more clear, not less. When the word came in, **light** and clarity came in.

i. "The Hebrew word for 'entrance' is *pethach*. Depending on whether it is pronounced with a short or a long e it can mean either 'door' (with a short e) or 'revelation' (with a long e).... Martin Luther thought it had to do with revelation; so his translation read, '*Wenn dein Wort offenbar wird*' ('When your word is revealed')." (Boice)

ii. "The explanation for this double meaning is that in the early days of the formation of the Hebrew language the Jews were bedouins, who lived in tents. The only opening in the tent was the flap of skin that was the door. So when the door was opened, light came into the tent, illuminating everything inside." (Boice)

iii. "It is painful to remember how much light may be shining around us on every side, without finding an *entrance* into the heart." (Bridges)

iv. "The word finds no entrance into some minds because they are blocked up with self-conceit, or prejudice, or indifference; but where due attention is given, divine illumination must surely follow upon knowledge of the mind of God." (Spurgeon)

b. **It gives understanding to the simple:** The word of God is so clear and **light**-giving that even **the simple** find **understanding**. It does not take great intellect or mental powers to benefit from God's word.

i. "It is a most striking instance of Divine condescension, that this word – so *wonderful* in its

high and heavenly mysteries – should yet open a path so plain, that the most unlearned may find and walk in it.” (Bridges)

ii. “So astonishing is the power of this heavenly light, that from any one page of this holy book, a child, or even [the simple], under heavenly teaching, may draw more instruction than the most acute philosopher could ever attain from any other fountain of light!” (Bridges)

iii. “These simple-hearted ones are frequently despised, and their simplicity has another meaning infused into it, so as to be made the theme of ridicule; but what matters it? Those whom the world dubs as fools are among the truly wise if they are taught of God.” (Spurgeon)

- This is a *blessing* for **the simple**; God does not forget them. He has not made salvation or growth in godliness primarily a matter of the intellect.

- This is a *promise* for **the simple**; they can approach God’s word with confidence, expecting God to give them **understanding**.

- This is a *responsibility* for **the simple**; they cannot make excuses for their average (or lower) intellect or mental powers. They are still responsible to seek God in His word.

c. **I opened my mouth and panted , for I longed for Your commandments:** Because the word of God is **light**-giving and clear (clear enough for the **simple**), the psalmist desired God’s word like a thirsty animal pants for water.

i. He may be panting because he is thirsty, or he may be panting gasping for air; but panting always denotes *desire*.

ii. "A metaphor taken from an animal exhausted in the chase. He runs, open-mouthed, to take in the cooling air; the heart beating high, and the muscular force nearly expended through fatigue. The psalmist sought for salvation, as he would run from a ferocious beast for his life. Nothing can show his earnestness in a stronger point of view." (Clarke)

iii. **I longed for Your commandments:** "This cannot mean anything else than that he longed to know them, longed to keep them, longed to teach them, longed to bring all around him into obedience to them. Many religious people long after the promises, and they do well; but they must not forget to have an equal longing for the commandments." (Spurgeon)

iv. Yet longing that is not acted upon is more *wishing* than longing. As Spurgeon observed, true longing will show itself in *action*: "Never rest content with mere longings. He that really longs is not content to long."

3. (132-135) *Four requests rooted in the word of God.*

**Look upon me and be merciful to me,
As Your custom *is* toward those who love Your name.
Direct my steps by Your word,
And let no iniquity have dominion over me.
Redeem me from the oppression of man,
That I may keep Your precepts.
Make Your face shine upon Your servant,
And teach me Your statutes.**

a. **Look upon me and be merciful to me:** This first request is really two: asking God to **look** and then to **be merciful**. The psalmist had reason to believe God would answer, knowing that this was God's **custom...toward those who love Your name**.

i. It is wonderful to think that God has a **custom**, a pattern of action, **toward those who love His name**. That **custom** is to **look upon** them (giving them His attention) and to **be merciful** to them. This promise is a solid ground for trusting, bold prayer in a time of need.

ii. **Look...be merciful**: Yet God's **look** – the turning of His attention – would be a curse and not a blessing unless it was accompanied by His mercy. If we have the first, we desire the second.

iii. "Lord! Since our looks to thee are often so slight, so cold, so distant, that no impression is made upon our hearts; do thou condescend continually to *look upon us* with mercy and power." (Bridges)

iv. "Brethren, there is great virtue in our looking to Christ: it is the way of salvation. What virtue, then, must there be in Christ's love-gaze upon us!" (Spurgeon)

v. **Those who love Your name**: To love the name of God means to...

- Love the *person* of God.
- Love the *character* of God.
- Love the *revelation* of God.
- Love the *glory* of God.

b. **Direct my steps by Your word**: The second request shows what he wanted to do with the mercy received from God. He wanted to take that mercy and use it to walk rightly before God. One part of this was to **let no iniquity have dominion over** him.

i. Many today want to **direct** their **steps** by something else, *anything* else other than the word of God.

- "Direct my steps by my feelings."
- "Direct my steps by my lusts."
- "Direct my steps by my friends."
- "Direct my steps by my parents."
- "Direct my steps by my circumstances."
- "Direct my steps by my fate."
- "Direct my steps by my comfort."

ii. The idea of the Hebrew here, according to Spurgeon, is "*Make my steps firm in thy word.*" We can walk forward in life with confidence as we find direction in God's word.

iii. "The psalmist would be kept from all vacillation, hesitation, or wandering; but he wants, when he is right, to be firmly right, to be distinctly, decidedly right, so he pleads, 'Make my steps firm.' Oh, how we often stagger along! We do what is right, but we quiver and shake while we are doing it." (Spurgeon)

iv. The psalmist was wise to understand that sin can **have dominion over** a man, even a man or woman who has a strong spiritual life. The Apostle Paul recognized the same danger: *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any* (1Co 6:12).

v. Sin, unchecked, will attempt to gain and hold dominion in my life. First it may be in a small or seemingly insignificant area, but that dominion will grow in size and strength until my spiritual life is seriously compromised.

vi. "I had rather be a prisoner to man all my life than be in bondage to sin one day. He says not, Let not

this and the other man rule over me; but `

let not sin have dominion over me. Well said!" (Michael Bruce, cited in Spurgeon)

vii. Yet when our **steps** are directed by the **word** of God, we will avoid being under the dominion of sin, and we can be freed from whatever level of dominion sin may have gained.

viii. In a New Testament context, this prayer has even greater grounds for confidence. "But let us mark, how fully is this prayer warranted by the special promise of the Gospel – *'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace'* (Rom 6:14, with 12)." (Bridges)

ix. "Brethren, we *can* overcome sin in the power of the Lord.... Sin is strong, but grace is stronger. Satan is wise, but God is all-wise. The Lord is on our side." (Spurgeon)

c. **Redeem me from the oppression of man:** The third request recognizes that there are dangers beyond the potential dominion of sin in the psalmist's spiritual life. There are also dangers from **the oppression of man**, from those who would oppose and oppress.

i. Notably, the psalmist asked for this so **that I may keep Your precepts**. He didn't just want liberty from man's oppression so he could serve himself, but so that he could properly obey God.

d. **Make Your face shine upon Your servant:** The fourth request is for an experience of the grace and goodness of God. To know the **face** of God shining upon you is to be at peace with God and to know He is at peace with you.

4. (136) *Sorrow that others do not keep the law of God.*

**Rivers of water run down from my eyes,
Because *men* do not keep Your law.**

a. **Rivers of water run down from my eyes:** This is a good example of poetic hyperbole in the psalms. Though there were not literal **rivers of water** coming down the face of the psalmist, he spoke truly according to the literary style of poetry. There is not the slightest problem in understanding his meaning.

i. "The idiom 'streams [lit., "irrigation canals," see Psa 1:3] of tears' is a hyperbole for deep sorrow and anguish of soul." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Tears show compassion, and compassion wins others far more effectively than belligerent arguments and certainly more effectively than anger." (Boice)

b. **Because men do not keep Your law:** The psalmist here did not sorrow over his own troubles, but over the sins of others and the consequences those sins would bring. As Jesus grieved over Jerusalem (Mat 23:37-39) and over the hard hearts of the religious leaders (Mar 3:5), so the psalmist grieved here.

i. "It grieveth me greatly to see thy law violated, and the transgressors thereof so careless of their own eternal good." (Trapp)

ii. "...plentiful and perpetual tears, witnesses of my deep sorrow for God's dishonour and displeasure, and for the miseries which sinners bring upon themselves." (Poole)

iii. "The want of this spirit is ever a feature of hardness and pride – a painful blot upon the profession of the gospel.... The same yearning sympathy forms the life, the pulse, and the strength of Missionary exertion, and has ever distinguished

those honoured servants of God who have devoted their time, their health, their talent, their all.” (Bridges)

iv. “The experience of this verse indicates a great advance upon anything we have had before: the Psalm and the Psalmist are both growing. That man is a ripe believer who sorrows because of the sins of others.” (Spurgeon)

R. Tsadde ? : The purity and truth of God’s word.

“The initial letter with which every verse commences sounds like the Hebrew word for righteousness: our keynote is righteousness.” (Spurgeon)

1. (137-138) *The righteousness of God and His word.*

**Righteous are You, O LORD,
And upright are Your judgments.
Your testimonies, *which* You have commanded,
Are righteous and very faithful.**

a. **Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments:** The psalmist understood that the **righteous** character of God was displayed in His word (**Your judgments**). In this the word of God is an accurate revelation of God, not only of His thoughts but also of His very character.

i. We might say that God’s written word is an *incomplete* display of His character and nature; that is, there is *more* to God than what we can receive from His word. But what we do have in His word is *accurate* and properly displays to us who He is.

ii. We might say that the God who actually exists is not *different than* His written revelation to us. He is *greater than* what can be comprehended through His written word, but He is not *different from* what is revealed to us through that word.

iii. "The strophe begins on an affirmation of the Lord's righteousness...and ends on an affirmation of his word. In between the psalmist laments his troubles." (VanGemeren)

b. **Your testimonies, which You have commanded, are righteous and very faithful:** For emphasis, the psalmist repeats the idea from the previous verse. The written word of God reflects both His **righteous** character and the fact that He is **very faithful**.

i. "The force of this expression is much feebler than that of the original, which literally may be rendered, 'Thou hast commanded righteousness, thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly.' So the Septuagint hath it. Righteousness and truth were his testimonies; the testimonies were one with his righteousness and truth." (Stephen, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. God's words are especially helpful for establishing that He is **very faithful**. We often judge a person's faithfulness by seeing if their words and their actions match. Along with other believers through the centuries, the psalmist could say that the words of God and the actions of God were and are consistent, and show Him to be **very faithful**.

iii. "Trust in the reliability of God's word is directly proportionate to one's trust in the Lord himself." (VanGemeren)

iv. "The Bible mirrors the character of God. Anyone who cares about knowing what is righteous and wants to act righteously should study the Bible." (Boice)

2. (139-140) *Zeal and love for God's word.*

**My zeal has consumed me,
Because my enemies have forgotten Your words.**

**Your word *is* very pure;
Therefore Your servant loves it.**

a. **My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words:** The more the **enemies** of the psalmist rejected the word of God, the more he was determined to be zealous for those words. He would make sure that *he* honored the word of God even if others did not.

i. **Zeal** implies energy and action. The appreciation of the psalmist for the word of God was not passive. The living and active word of God brought forth a living and active response from the psalmist.

ii. "Thus we see every man is eaten up with some kind of zeal. The drunkard is consumed with drunkenness, the whore-monger is spent with his whoredom, the heretic is eaten with heresies. Oh, how ought this to make us ashamed, who are so little eaten, spent, and consumed with the zeal of the word!... Oh, what a benefit it is to be eaten up with the love and zeal of a good thing!" (Greenham, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "Such was [the psalmist's] high estimation of *the testimonies of his God*, that his spirits were *consumed* with vehement grief in witnessing their neglect. He could bear that *his enemies* should *forget him*; but his *zeal* could not endure, that they should *forget the words of his God*." (Bridges)

iv. This brings to mind the passage remembered by the disciples when Jesus cleansed the temple courts of the merchants and moneychangers at the beginning of His ministry (Joh 2:13-17). At that time, the disciples remembered the line from Psa 69:9 : *Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up*. This line carries much the same thought, and also reflects the kind of

zeal that Jesus had when He cleared the temple courts. *They* had forgotten His words.

v. "*They have forgotten thy words*, i.e. despise and disobey them; which in Scripture use is oft called a forgetting of them, as the remembering of them is oft put for loving and practicing them." (Poole)

b. **Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it:** The psalmist understood and appreciated the *purity* of God's word. In its original autograph writings it is *perfectly pure*, being absolutely inspired by God. In addition, the copies we have of those original writings are also **pure**, being extremely reliable copies.

i. **Pure:** "...in the original, 'tried, refined, purified, like gold in the furnace,' absolutely perfect, without the dross of vanity and fallibility, which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them." (Horne)

ii. "In the word of God there is no admixture of error or sin. It is pure in its sense, pure in its language, pure in its spirit, pure in its influence, and all this to the very highest *degree* – 'very pure'." (Spurgeon)

iii. For the Hebrew Scriptures, the quality of the text was preserved by the diligent practices of the professional scribes. According to researchers (such as Josh McDowell in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*), they practiced the following in the preparation and copying of manuscripts:

- The parchment was made only from the skin of clean animals. It had to be prepared by a Jew only, and the skins were fastened together by strings taken from clean animals.
- Each column had to have no less than 48 and no more than 60 lines. The entire parchment had to be

lined before writing began.

- The ink had to be of no other color than black, and it had to be prepared according to a special recipe.
- No word and no letter could be written from memory; the scribe had to have an authentic copy before him, and he had to read and pronounce out loud each word before writing it.
- He was required to reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the word for "God" (*Elohim*) and wash his whole body before writing the word used in place of "Jehovah" [*LORD* in the New King James Version) so as not to contaminate the Holy Name.
- Strict rules were given concerning forms of the letters, spaces between letters, words, and sections, the use of the pen, the color of the parchment, and so forth.
- The revision of a roll had to be made within 30 days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless.

One mistake on a sheet condemned the entire sheet; if three mistakes were found in any larger section, the entire manuscript was condemned.

- Every word and every letter was counted, and *if a letter had been omitted, or an extra letter inserted, or if any letter touched one another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed.*

iv. The manuscript evidence for the accuracy of the Hebrew text is established. Until 1947, the oldest Hebrew manuscripts were from about AD 900. In 1947, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed manuscripts from 150-200 BC. In comparing the manuscripts, almost 1000 years apart, there were remarkably few differences. This proved that the

diligent practices of the professional scribes had accurately preserved the text of the Hebrew Scriptures.

v. Regarding the Greek Scriptures, there is a similarly astonishing rate of accuracy. Because of the vast number and quality of ancient Greek manuscripts, and the existence of relatively early copies, scholars often say that the error rate is between 0.5% and 2%.

vi. "New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very misleading. Most of the differences are completely inconsequential – spelling errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side by side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement a full 98% of the time." (Greg Koukl)

vii. Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. According to Geisler and Nix in their book *A General Introduction to the Bible*, this means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire New Testament text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt. These lines concern about 400 words, and none of the questioned lines or words affect any significant doctrine of the Christian faith.

viii. Indeed! **Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it.** This is true for both the original autographs and the extremely reliable copies we have of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. "Therefore; because of that exact purity and holiness of it...ungodly men either despise or hate it." (Poole)

c. **Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it:** The Bible gives us almost unending reasons to love the word of God and the God who gave it to us.

- It is the word of the LORD (Gen 15:1).
- It is the word of God (Luk 8:11).
- It is the word of the kingdom (Mat 13:19).
- It is the word of salvation (Act 13:26).
- It is the word of grace (Act 14:3).
- It is the word of the gospel (Act 15:7).
- It is the word of faith (Rom 10:8).
- It is the word of the cross (1Co 1:18).
- It is the word of reconciliation (2Co 5:19).
- It is the word of truth (2Co 6:7).
- It is the word of life (Php 2:16).
- It is the word of Christ (Col 3:16).
- It is the word of His power (Heb 1:3).

3. (141-142) *Holding fast to the true word.*

**I am small and despised,
Yet I do not forget Your precepts.
Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
And Your law is truth.**

a. **I am small and despised, yet I do not forget Your precepts:** The psalmist felt himself insignificant, both in his own estimate (**small**) and in the estimation of others (**despised**). Yet he found comfort and strength in remembering the word of God.

i. We think of individuals who have been small and despised – a young man like David (1Sa 16:10-13) and an older man like Paul (2 Corinthians 11). Yet

they found courage in God, and they understood God by His word.

ii. It also shows us that the psalmist would not neglect God's word when he was depressed or downcast. **Small and despised** does not feel good; yet he still remembered the word of God when he felt this way. It is common to run away from exactly what we need when we feel **small and despised**.

b. **Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth:** The psalmist confidently stated the **everlasting** character of God's **righteousness**; He is righteous and will not change. Connected to that, he proclaimed that this unchanging God has given us a word (**Your law**) that **is truth**.

i. **Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness:** "This is the joy and glory of the saints, that what God is he always will be, and his mode of procedure towards the sons of men is immutable. Having kept his promise, and dealt out justice among his people, he will do so world without end." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Your law is truth:** We remember the conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate. Jesus said, *"For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."* Pilate's cynical reply was, *"What is truth?"* (Joh 18:37-38). For Pilate, soldiers and armies were truth; Rome was truth; Caesar was truth; and political power was truth. Yet Jesus knew what truth was, while Pilate was still seeking. Jesus knew, **Your law is truth**.

iii. This is especially meaningful in a day when *relativism* has a strong hold in the everyday thinking

of people. It is common for people today to think there is no such thing as “real” truth; there is only *your* truth and *my* truth and *their* truth. Western society used to believe that truth was that which corresponded to reality (what is really there); now truth is often held to be what makes sense or is helpful to me individually.

iv. The late Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer used to promote the idea of “true truth.” His concept was that the Biblical message is *true* fundamentally, apart from how one receives it or how it works in one’s life.

4. (143-144) *God’s word gives life in times of trouble.*

**Trouble and anguish have overtaken me,
Yet Your commandments *are* my delights.
The righteousness of Your testimonies *is* everlasting;
Give me understanding, and I shall live.**

a. **Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet Your commandments are my delights:** Despite the difficulties of his life, the psalmist still found *delight* in God’s word. His appreciation of God and His word was not only valid in good times, but also in **trouble and anguish**.

i. “When we are most sorely afflicted, and cannot see the reason for the dispensation, we may fall back upon this most sure and certain fact, that God is righteous, and his dealings with us are righteous too. It should be our glory to sing this brave confession when all things around us appear to suggest the contrary. This is the richest adoration.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “Years ago there were Christians who used to put the promises of God to the test and when they received what was promised would write ‘T’ and ‘P’ in

their Bible next to the promise. The letters stood for 'tried and proven,' exactly what the psalmist says he found to be true in his experience." (Boice)

b. The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; give me understanding, and I shall live: We might think that what the psalmist needed to **live** was deliverance from his **trouble and anguish**. He found **understanding** the word of God more important.

i. One reason he found this to be so was because he understood that **the righteousness of God's word is everlasting**. He knew the eternal character of the word of God, and it made that word all the more important and relevant to him.

ii. "When all other laws and sentences, though engraven in brass or marble, shall decay and determine, Thy law lasteth for ever, and so shall they that observe it." (Trapp)

S. Qoph ? : Praying to the God of the Bible.

1. (145-147) Crying out to God with hope in His word.

I cry out with my whole heart;

Hear me, O LORD!

I will keep Your statutes.

I cry out to You;

Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies.

I rise before the dawning of the morning,

And cry for help;

I hope in Your word.

a. I cry out with my whole heart.... I will keep Your statutes: The psalmist pleaded with God, crying out before Him. In his pleading, he wanted to **keep** the word of God. This was not merely a cry for help or deliverance or forgiveness; this was a cry for *obedience*.

i. "Yet these verses are not really about the psalmist's enemies, as bad as they were. They are about the writer's prayer life and how he learned to use God's word when praying." (Boice)

ii. "The whole soul of the psalmist was engaged in this good work. He whose *whole heart* cries to God will never rise from the throne of grace without a blessing." (Clarke)

iii. "There may be no beauty of elocution about such prayers, no length of expression, no depth of doctrine, nor accuracy of diction; but if the whole heart be in them they will find their way to the heart of God." (Spurgeon)

iv. "God looks not at the elegance of your prayers, to see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

b. I cry out to You; save me, and I will keep Your testimonies: For emphasis, the idea is repeated from the previous verse. The psalmist passionately cried out to God for the wisdom and strength and ability to obey God. This is a prayer that pleases God.

i. **I cry out** means that the prayer was *vocal*. "Men find it very helpful to use their voices in prayer; it is difficult long to maintain the intensity of devotion unless we hear ourselves speak; hence [the psalmist] at length broke through his silence, arose from his quiet meditations, and began crying with voice as well as heart unto the Lord his God." (Spurgeon)

c. **I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word:** The psalmist passionately depended on God and His word, but that did not eliminate the participation of the psalmist in any way. He still woke early to seek God, in prayer (**cry for help**) that was helped by God's word (**I hope in Your word**).

i. "So long as *the duty only* of prayer is known, we shall be content with our set seasons. But when *the privilege* is felt, we shall be early at work, following it closely morning and night." (Bridges)

ii. "The word furnished his hope, and his hope his prayer." (Trapp)

iii. We use prayer in our study of the word of God; this is essential. Yet we also use the word of God in our prayers. In prayer, the word of God shows us:

- The nature and heart of the God we pray to.
- What we have received from God, and what we should thank Him for.
- His greatness, informing and expanding our praise.
- His moral will, directing us to pray that we can do it.
- His promises to His people, which we claim by faith.
- Substance for our prayers, as we pray-read the Scriptures.

iv. "He who is diligent in prayer will never be destitute of hope. Observe that as the early bird gets the worm, so the early prayer is soon refreshed with hope." (Spurgeon)

2. (148-149) *Diligently seeking the word that brings life.*

**My eyes are awake through the *night* watches,
That I may meditate on Your word.**

**Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness;
O LORD, revive me according to Your justice.**

a. **My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word:** The psalmist not only woke early to seek God (as in the previous verse), he also stayed awake **through the night** to think about God and His **word**.

i. Jesus sometimes prayed early in the morning (Mar 1:35). On some occasions Jesus prayed all night (Luk 6:12).

ii. Boice defines **meditate**: "Internalizing the Bible's teaching to such an extent that the truths discovered in the Bible become part of how we think, so that we think differently and then also function differently as a result."

b. **Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O LORD, revive me according to Your justice:** The psalmist asked for God to **hear** him **according to** the goodness and mercy (**lovingkindness**) of God; he also asked God to **revive** him **according to** the **justice** of God. Both are reasons to pray and to have confidence in our pleading.

i. We can pray **according to Your lovingkindness**: "Lord, I know that I don't deserve to be heard by You. Yet I believe that You are rich in grace and mercy. Please, according to Your generous and kind love, hear my prayer."

ii. Spurgeon on **lovingkindness** (*hesed*): "Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but lovingkindness is doubly dear; it is the cream of kindness."

iii. We can pray **according to Your justice**: “Lord, I know that my sins are righteously forgiven because of what Jesus did on the cross. I know that You have forgiven me **according to Your justice**, and as one so forgiven I pray. I also know that You, **according to Your justice**, see the righteousness of my cause with those who are against me. Because of these, please bring me new life.”

iv. **Revive me according to Your justice**: Though revival from God is never deserved, it can still be asked for **according** to the justice of God. It can be prayed for based on the justice-satisfying work of Jesus Christ. It can also be prayed for with an eye to honoring the justice of God on earth, especially when wickedness abounds.

3. (150-151) Near and far.

They draw near who follow after wickedness;

They are far from Your law.

You are near, O LORD,

And all Your commandments are truth.

a. **They draw near who follow after wickedness**:

The psalmist could sense that the wicked who opposed him were coming closer and becoming more of a threat to him.

b. **They are far from Your law**: Though they came closer to the psalmist, they were **far** from God’s word.

i. “Before these men could become persecutors of [the psalmist] they were obliged to get away from the restraints of God’s law. They could not hate a saint and yet love the law.” (Spurgeon)

c. **You are near, O LORD**: Though the wicked were both near to the psalmist and far from God’s word, the psalmist knew that God was **near**. God had come near to

the psalmist, and one way was through the word of God itself.

i. "Note the realism of the double statement, *They draw near...but thou art near*. The threat is not glossed over; it is put in perspective by a bigger fact." (Kidner)

d. **And all Your commandments are truth**: Because God came **near** to the psalmist, he could see clearly that **all** God's **commandments are truth**. He understood that God's word was truly inspired and infallible.

4. (152) *Confidence in the eternal word.*

**Concerning Your testimonies,
I have known of old that You have founded them
forever.**

a. **I have known of old**: The psalmist had an **old** relationship with the word of God. The great love and appreciation he had with the Scriptures was not a youthful surge of infatuation; it was the deep, settled love with roots made deep by time.

b. **You have founded them forever**: His long love and appreciation for the Scriptures led him to understand that they were *eternal* (**founded...forever**). The more he studied and meditated upon them, the more he understood their divine origin.

i. "We are satisfied with the truth which is old as the hills and as fixed as the great mountains. Let 'cultured intellects' invent another god, more gentle and effeminate than the God of Abraham; we are well content to worship Jehovah, who is eternally the same." (Spurgeon)

ii. This was his testimony to answered prayer. This whole passage shows us:

- How he prayed (*with my whole heart*, verse 145).
- What he prayed for (*save me, and I will keep Your testimonies*, verse 146).
- When he prayed (*before the dawning of the morning*, verse 147).
- How long he prayed (*through the night watches*, verse 148).
- The grounds of his request (*according to Your lovingkindness...according to Your justice*, verse 149).
- How God answered his prayer (*You are near, O LORD*, verse 150).
- His testimony to answered prayer (*Your testimonies...You have founded them forever*, verse 152).

T. Resh ? : Revival according to the word of God.

1. (153-154) *In hard times, a plea for new life from God's word.*

**Consider my affliction and deliver me,
For I do not forget Your law.
Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me according to Your word.**

a. **Consider my affliction and deliver me:** We are reminded that the psalmist's life was not lived in an ivory tower or a secluded place where all he did was study the Scriptures all day long. He lived a real life, interacting with people (some of whom became his enemies or opponents). He lived a life that experienced **affliction**.

i. "Yet there is no impatience: he does not ask for hasty action, but for consideration. In effect he cries – 'Look into my grief, and see whether I do not need to be delivered. From my sorrowful condition judge as

to the proper method and time for my rescue.”
(Spurgeon)

b. **For I do not forget Your law:** In the lives of some, **affliction** drives them away from God and His word. For the psalmist, such troubled times drove him closer to God and His word.

c. **Plead my cause and redeem me:** The psalmist looked for help and salvation *outside of himself*. This reinforces the idea that his previous claims to righteousness were not absolute, and were made comparing himself to other men, ungodly men. He knew that he needed God to **plead** his **cause**; he knew he needed God to **redeem** him.

i. **Plead my cause** uses language from the courtroom. The psalmist asked God to defend him as a lawyer might. “The verb ‘defend’ [**plead**] (*ribah*) as well as the noun ‘cause’ (*rib*) represent a technical legal jargon (Psa 35:1; Psa 43:1; Psa 74:22), often used by the prophets as God’s covenant prosecutors (cf. Hos 4:1). (VanGemeren)

ii. “But you say, – ‘How do I know that he speaks for me?’ Yet if not for you, then for whom does he speak? Who needs an advocate more than you? He pleads nothing favorable *of you*; but much, very much, *for you*. For he pleads the merit of his own blood.” (Bridges)

d. **Revive me according to Your word:** This thought is repeated from previous passages in this psalm (verse 25, 107). The psalmist wanted to be made alive, and to have that life brought to him **according to** God’s **word**.

i. The word of God is a *source* of revival. If we will read the word of God and do what it tells us to do – in prayer, in repentance, in dedication, and in pursuing

God with the whole heart – it will be a source of personal and corporate revival.

ii. Revival itself is **according to** God's **word**. The concept of revival (both personal and corporate) is Biblical. A genuine revival will honor and promote God's word.

iii. However, there may be a false or pseudo revival which is *not* **according to Your word**. It is fair to assess purported words of revival according to the measure, "Is this **according to** God's **word**?"

iv. "What a mighty plea is this – 'according to thy word.' No gun in all our arsenals can match it." (Spurgeon)

2. (155-156) *The wicked are far from a close salvation.*

**Salvation is far from the wicked,
For they do not seek Your statutes.
Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD;
Revive me according to Your judgments.**

a. **Salvation is far from the wicked:** The psalmist understood that the wicked would not be saved, even as Paul later stated (Gal 5:19-21). Yet he also understood that their wickedness was rooted in their refusal to seek God through His word (**they do not seek Your statutes**).

i. "By their perseverance in evil they have almost put themselves out of the pale of hope. They talk about being saved, but they cannot have known anything of it or they would not remain wicked." (Spurgeon)

ii. "They have no one to *consider their affliction* – no one to *deliver them* – no one to *plead their cause*. Indeed, all the misery that an immortal soul is capable of enduring throughout eternity is included in this

sentence – *Salvation is far from the wicked.*" (Bridges)

iii. **Salvation is far from the wicked:** "How can it be otherwise? When as God is neither in their heads (Psa 10:4), nor hearts (Psa 14:1), nor words (Psa 12:4), nor ways (Tit 1:16), can these have part or portion in his salvation?" (Trapp)

iv. "The Lord is almighty to pardon; but he will not use it for thee an impenitent sinner. Thou hast not a friend on the bench, not an attribute in all God's name will speak for thee. Mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of its fellow-attributes for thy damnation." (Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

v. **They do not seek Your statutes:** "And they who *do not seek, shall not find.*" (Clarke)

b. **Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD:** Though the wicked are far from **salvation** and far from God's word, the **tender mercies** of God are close to all who will seek them. In a paradoxical way, though the salvation of God is **far** from them, God is not far because of His **tender mercies**.

i. We can measure the greatness of this mercy:

- By the infinite debt that it blots out (Isa 1:18; Isa 43:22-25).

- By the eternal ruin from which it saves (Psa 86:13).

- By the heavenly crown to which it raises (Rev 1:5-6).

ii. "The other epithet he gives them is, that they are 'tender' mercies; because the Lord is easy to be entreated; for he is slow unto wrath, but ready to show mercy." (Cowper, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **Revive me according to Your judgments:** This is the same thought repeated from verse 154. The psalmist is emphasizing in the two verses that God's word is both a source and a measure of revival.

3. (157-158) *Keeping to God's word despite persecution.*

**Many are my persecutors and my enemies,
Yet I do not turn from Your testimonies.
I see the treacherous, and am disgusted,
Because they do not keep Your word.**

a. **Many are my persecutors and my enemies:** The psalmist lived life in the real world, not sheltered in a constant Scripture-study environment. His trust in the word of God was forged in the real world, a world full of **persecutors** and **enemies**.

i. "Persecution, to the false professor, is an occasion of apostasy (Mat 13:20-21); to the faithful servant of Christ, it is the trial of his faith (1Pe 1:6-7), the source of his richest consolations (Mat 5:10-12, Act 13:50-52, 1Pe 4:12-16), the guard of his profession (Mat 10:16, Php 2:14-16), and the strength of his perseverance (Act 20:22-24)."
(Bridges)

b. **Yet I do not turn from Your testimonies:** The presence of so many **persecutors** and **enemies** did not make the psalmist despair or doubt the love of God for him. He didn't have the expectation that a godly life was a problem-free life. Instead, he was determined to keep turned to and focused on the word of God.

i. "So long as they cannot drive or draw us into a spiritual decline our foes have done us no great harm, and they have accomplished nothing by their malice. If we do not decline they are defeated. If they cannot make us sin they have missed their mark.

Faithfulness to the truth is victory over our enemies.”
(Spurgeon)

c. **I see the treacherous and am disgusted, because they do not keep Your word:** It wasn't that the psalmist expected godly behavior from the ungodly – something that Paul warned about (1Co 5:9-13). He felt **disgusted** because God and His word were being disgraced, even if it came from the disgraceful.

i. “I was sorry to see such sinners. I was sick of them, disgusted with them, I could not endure them. I found no pleasure in them, they were a sad sight to me, however fine their clothing or witty their chattering. Even when they were most mirthful a sight of them made my heart heavy; I could not tolerate either them or their doings.” (Spurgeon)

ii. This sensitivity toward sin and passion for the glory of God is entirely characteristic of the *revival* that the psalmist prays for repeatedly in this section.

iii. “A fellowship with the joys of angels over repenting sinners (Luk 15:10) will be accompanied with bitterness of godly sorrow over the hardness and impenitency of those, who *keep not the word of God*.” (Bridges)

4. (159-160) *Revived by the completely true and lasting word.*

**Consider how I love Your precepts;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.**

**The entirety of Your word *is* truth,
And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.**

a. **Consider how I love Your precepts; revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness:** The

psalmist asked God to look at his love for His word, but then asked for revival on the basis of God's **lovingkindness** instead of on his own merit.

i. "A second time he asks for consideration. As he said before, 'Consider mine affliction,' so now he says, 'Consider mine affection.' He loved the precepts of God – loved them unspeakably – loved them so as to be grieved with those who did not love them." (Spurgeon)

b. **Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness:** An idea stated before (verse 88) is here repeated. Revival is never deserved or earned, but given from the **lovingkindness** of God.

i. "The consciousness of need is revealed in the thrice repeated, 'Quicken [**Revive**] me.' He feels the weakening of his very life under the pressure of circumstances." (Morgan)

c. **The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever:** The psalmist again declares the infallible character of the word of God. The *entire* word is true, not merely portions or individual concepts from the word. Not only is it true; it is *eternally* true.

i. "The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels.... There is not one single mistake either in the word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of revelation nor of providence will there be any need to put a single note of errata. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse." (Spurgeon)

U. Shin ? : In awe of God's word.

"The qoph stanza was almost entirely a prayer. In these stanzas the petitions tend to drop away – stanza twenty-one (the sin/shin stanza) has no explicit prayers at all – and in their place comes a quiet, obedient waiting for God."
(Boice)

1. (161-162) The treasure of God's awe-inspiring word.

**Princes persecute me without a cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your word.
I rejoice at Your word
As one who finds great treasure.**

a. **Princes persecute me without a cause:** In the real-life world of the psalmist, he even interacted with **princes** – rulers among men, who persecuted him **without a cause**.

i. Those who believe that David was the anonymous psalmist of this great psalm know that David was indeed persecuted by princes (Saul and his associates) **without a cause**.

ii. "It was well that the sufferer could truthfully assert that this persecution was without cause. He had not broken their laws, he had not injured them, he had not even desired to see them injured, he had not been an advocate of rebellion or anarchy, he had neither openly nor secretly opposed their power, and therefore, while this made their oppression the more inexcusable, it took away a part of its sting, and helped the brave-hearted servant of God to bear up."
(Spurgeon)

iii. "This division is remarkable in that it is one of the only two which contain no petition [the other was *Mem*, 97-104]. That fact is the more remarkable because its opening sentence shows that the singer is still conscious of the circumstances of trial." (Morgan)

b. But my heart stands in awe of Your word: Difficult trials – even persecution by those in authority – would not make the psalmist lose his **awe** of God's **word**. He did not have a *conditional* appreciation of the word of God; he loved it in good times and bad.

i. "He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and sceptres become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God." (Spurgeon)

ii. Bridges says that some great Jewish Scripture collections have on their frontispiece Jacob's statement of fear and astonishment connected with his vision of God at Bethel: *How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!* (Gen 28:17).

c. I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure: The psalmist loved God's word as some people love **treasure**. He knew it was precious and enriching to life. Yet the original Hebrew has **treasure** in the sense of *spoil* or *plunder* from battle.

i. **Rejoice at Your word:** "I will go to the length of saying that unless we do have deep awe of the word we shall never have high joy over it. Our rejoicing will be measured by our reverencing." (Spurgeon)

ii. "This appears to refer to such *spoil* as is acquired by *stripping the dead* in a field of battle, taking the rich garments of the slain chiefs; or it may refer to *plunder* in general. As God *opened his eyes* he *beheld wonders in his law*; and each discovery of this kind was like finding a prize." (Clarke)

iii. Sometimes spoil is fought for, and riches from God's word must be fought for. Other times spoil is found, and the riches from God's word are simply received.

- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, the battle is over.
- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, the enemy has less to fight with.
- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, there is a sense of victory.
- If riches from the Bible are like spoil from battle, there is profit, pleasure, and honor.

2. (163-164) *Continually praising the God of the word.*

I hate and abhor lying,

But I love Your law.

Seven times a day I praise You,

Because of Your righteous judgments.

a. **I hate and abhor lying, but I love Your law:** The hatred and love in this verse fit together perfectly. One who truly *loves* the pure truth of God will naturally **hate** lies.

i. "If we keep clear of all lying, our song will be the more acceptable because it comes out of pure lips. If we never flatter men we shall be in the better condition for honouring the Lord." (Spurgeon)

b. **Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments:** The goodness and the glory of God's word (**Your righteous judgments**) prompted **praise** from the psalmist. This praise was constant and continual (**seven times a day**).

i. "...seven times; many times; that definite number being oft taken indefinitely, as Lev 26:28, and

elsewhere." (Poole)

ii. It is good to make regular times for prayer, Bible reading, and reflection throughout the day; but it must be done without a legalistic spirit. "Young Christians indeed sometimes unwarily bring themselves into 'bondage,' in forcing their consciences to a frequency of set times for duty, interfering with present obligations, or pressing unduly upon the weaknesses of the flesh." (Bridges)

iii. "Do we praise God seven times a day? Do we praise him once in seven days?" (Spurgeon)

3. (165-166) The peace of obedience to God's word.

**Great peace have those who love Your law,
And nothing causes them to stumble.
LORD, I hope for Your salvation,
And I do Your commandments.**

a. **Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble:** The great love that the psalmist had for the law brought real benefits to his life. It brought him **great peace** and stability in life (**nothing causes them to stumble**).

i. "*Shalom* is a large, embracing word for the good that comes to the one God favors." (Boice)

ii. "Amidst the storms and tempests of the world, there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those, who not only do the will of God, but 'love' to do it." (Horne)

iii. "They are at peace with God, by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves, by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men, by the spirit of charity; and the whole

creation is at peace with them, and all things work together for their good.” (Horne)

iv. “This verse does not promise peace to those who perfectly keep God’s Law, for who can keep it? It promises peace to those who ‘love’ God’s Law.” (Boice)

v. “In every age there have been Luthers and Latimers [Hugh Latimer, martyred in 1555], who have not only held fast their confidence, but whose peace has deepened with the roaring of the waves. The more they have been forsaken of men, the closer has been their communion with God.” (Martin, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments:** The psalmist here displays the kind of active faith and trust that saves. He had faith in God for **salvation**; yet it was a faith that could also say, “**I do Your commandments.**” This is the kind of living faith so strongly promoted in the Epistle of James.

i. “This saying he borrowed from good old Jacob, Gen 49:18.” (Trapp)

ii. This **hope** is very much like faith. “Faith is the exercise of the soul in a sense of need, in desire, and in trust. Faith goes to God on the ground of the promise; *hope* in the expectation of the thing promised. Thus *hope* implies the operation of faith.” (Bridges)

4. (167-168) *Keeping the word of God.*

**My soul keeps Your testimonies,
And I love them exceedingly.
I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,
For all my ways are before You.**

a. **My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly:** The psalmist *kept* the word of God not only with his outward actions, but also with his **soul**. His love and conformity to the word of God was deeply rooted, not superficial.

i. "Indeed, the bias of the new nature to *keep the precepts* is as prevalent, as that of the old nature to break them." (Bridges)

b. **I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You:** For the psalmist, the knowledge that **all my ways are before You** prompted obedience. He knew that the God who gave the word also observed his life. This is in contrast to the many who live as if God does not observe **all...ways** of a man.

i. "The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him: Mar 14:65. So does the hypocrite; he first says in his heart, God sees not, or at least forgets that he sees, and then he makes bold to sin against him." (Gurnall, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **Your precepts...Your testimonies...before You:** "Note the reverence for God Himself, not for Scripture in isolation." (Kidner)

V. Tau ? : Sought by God and His Word.

"The psalmist is approaching the end of the Psalm, and his petitions gather force and fervency; he seems to break into the inner circle of divine fellowship, and to come even to the feet of the great God whose help he is imploring. This nearness creates the most lowly view of himself, and leads him to close the Psalm upon his face in deepest self-humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost sheep." (Spurgeon)

1. (169-170) *Deliverance according to God's word.*

**Let my cry come before You, O LORD;
Give me understanding according to Your word.
Let my supplication come before You;
Deliver me according to Your word.**

a. **Let my cry come before You...give me understanding according to Your word:** The **cry** of the psalmist is an expression of *prayer*, a plea to gain **understanding according to Your word**. He wanted his thoughts to be transformed **according** to the word of God.

i. This is very much the same kind of thought the Apostle Paul expressed in Rom 12:2 : *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*. The psalmist wanted his **understanding** of life and the world shaped – *transformed* – by the word of God.

ii. "Here the psalmist's cry for deliverance is *personified*; made an intelligent being, and sent up to the throne of grace to negotiate in his behalf." (Clarke)

iii. **Come before You:** "The verb *q-r-b* in the Hiphil is a technical term for the act of presenting an offering.... He has nothing left to present but a 'cry.'" (VanGemeren)

b. **Let my supplication come before You:** This is another reference to prayer by the psalmist, this time a prayer for deliverance **according to Your word**. He wanted deliverance, but wanted it only as it was consistent with God's revealed word and will. He did not want an unrighteous or unwise deliverance.

i. He also asked for this deliverance according to the *promises* of God's word. "It is beautiful to observe the

oil of the Psalmist's faith feeding the flame of his supplication. Every petition is urged upon the warrant of a promise – *according to thy word.*" (Bridges)

ii. "Many prayers hath he made to God in this Psalm: now in the end he prays for his prayers, that the Lord would let them come before him." (Cowper, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (171-172) Praising God and speaking of His word.

**My lips shall utter praise,
For You teach me Your statutes.
My tongue shall speak of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness.**

a. **My lips shall utter praise.... My tongue shall speak of Your word:** The psalmist wanted his words (**lips.... tongue**) to both **praise** God and to **speak of** His **word**. He knew that often words are either wicked or vain or both. He was determined that others would hear him **praise** God, and **speak** of His **word**.

i. "In the two expressions, *pour forth* [**shall utter**] and *sing* [**shall speak**], there may be a hint of, respectively, the spontaneous personal and the corporate: the former word suggesting the bubbling up of a spring, and the latter (lit. 'my tongue will answer') the antiphonal praise of a choir." (Kidner)

b. **My lips shall utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes:** His **lips** could praise God because they had been taught His word. The psalmist's **lips** did not praise God by nature; he had to be *taught* God's truth, and taught from God Himself. Also, the word of God *informed* his praise; it was intelligent.

i. "And yet who of us are fit to *praise*, except those whom *God has taught*? The 'new song' ill accords with the old heart." (Bridges)

c. **For all Your commandments are righteous:** Knowing the purity and inerrancy of God's word made the psalmist want to **speak** of it to others. He was confident in his convictions.

i. "Then should we break through our sinful silence.... It is not only of God's works that we are to speak, but of his word." (Spurgeon)

3. (173-174) *Longing for salvation and loving God's word.*

**Let Your hand become my help,
For I have chosen Your precepts.
I long for Your salvation, O LORD,
And Your law is my delight.**

a. **Let Your hand become my help, for I have chosen Your precepts:** The psalmist felt he could boldly ask for God's **help**, because he had chosen to love and keep the word of God.

i. "The prayer reminds us of Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink; he, too, cried, 'Lord, help me,' and the hand of his Master was stretched out for his rescue." (Spurgeon)

b. **I long for Your salvation...Your law is my delight:** These two expressions go together. Because God's **salvation** is from and according to His word (1Pe 1:23), it was natural for him to **delight** in God's word as he longed for God's **salvation**.

i. **Salvation** "...hath long been the object of the hopes, the desires, and the 'longing' expectation of the faithful, from Adam to this hour; and will continue so to be, until He, who hath already visited us in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty, to complete our redemption and take us to himself." (Horne)

4. (175-176) *Depending on the word of the God who seeks us.*

**Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;
And let Your judgments help me.
I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
Seek Your servant,
For I do not forget Your commandments.**

a. **Let my soul live, and it shall praise You; and let Your judgments help me:** The psalmist recognized that his **soul** needed both *life* from God and *guidance* from God's word. With this combination of life and guidance, he would build a healthy relationship with God.

i. "Verse 175, the next to the last verse, is a good biblical statement of what the Westminster Shorter Catechism calls 'the chief end of man,' namely, to glorify God and to enjoy him forever: 'Let me live that I may praise you.' But verse 176, the last verse, reminds us that this praise comes from poor, weak, lost, and straying sinners like ourselves." (Boice)

ii. The ending section of this great psalm emphasizes the psalmist's great need for God and his dependence upon Him. His love for and dedication to the word of God has not made him more spiritually *independent*, but more spiritually *dependent* upon God. What did the psalmist need?

- Understanding (verse 169).
- Deliverance (verse 170).
- Ability to worship God rightly (verses 171-172).
- Power to live an upright life (verses 173-174).
- Strength to persevere (verse 175).

iii. "The consciousness of need is revealed in each successive petition. Yet the song is never a wail of

despair, because side by side with the sense of need, there is evident throughout a profound conviction of the sufficiency of the will of God.” (Morgan)

b. **I have gone astray like a lost sheep:** This great psalm ends on a touching note. The psalmist remembered his own frailty and sinful tendencies (**astray like a lost sheep**), and therefore asked God to **seek** him.

i. “Here is, first, *a confession of imperfection and of helplessness*. It means really a continual imperfection and helplessness, for the Hebrew verb relates not only to the past, but to the present.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “The author had not become self-righteous by his devotions, despite his reiterated claims to have obeyed the Bible’s teachings.” (Boice)

iii. “This verse is extremely emotional and full of tears, for truly we are all thus going astray, so that we must pray to be visited, sought, and carried over by the most godly Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God blessed forever. Amen.” (Luther, cited in Boice)

iv. “He was not like a dog, that somehow or other can find its way back; but he was like a lost sheep, which goes further and further away from home; yet still he was a sheep, and the Lord’s sheep, his property, and precious in his sight, and therefore he hoped to be sought in order to be restored.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments:** We can surmise that *God sought His servant in His word*. God does **seek** after us in His word. His word tests us; it encourages us; it strengthens us; it rebukes us; it helps us; it teaches us; it gives us understanding; it protects us.

i. **Seek Your servant:** "A poor, lost, weak, sinful – yes, even unprofitable – servant (see Luk 17:10), but still a servant of God." (Boice)

ii. The psalmist describes a Rom 7:21 kind of experience: *I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.* "And the Psalmist had the same remedy at the early period, as had the apostle in the later times; for God's salvation is one. The psalmist's remedy was, 'Seek thy servant;' the apostle's, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'" (Stephen, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "The note of urgent need on which the psalm ends is proof enough that the love of Scripture, which has motivated the scribes of every age, need not harden into academic pride. This man would have taken his stance not with the self-congratulating Pharisee of the parable, but with the publican who stood afar off, but went home justified." (Kidner)

iv. The psalm ends on the reminder that the power and greatness of God's word does not rest only in its literary brilliance. Its greatness and glory is in the fact that God comes to us and seeks us in and through His word.

v. "I do not think that there could possibly be a more appropriate conclusion of such a Psalm as this, so full of the varied experience and the ever-changing frames and feelings even of a child of God, in the sunshine and the cloud, in the calm and in the storm, than this ever-clinging sense of his propensity to wander, and the expression of his utter inability to find his way back without the Lord's guiding hand to restore him." (Bouchier, cited in Spurgeon)

"As far as I have been able, as far as I have been aided by the Lord, I have treated throughout, and expounded, this great Psalm. A task which more able and learned expositors have performed, or will perform better; nevertheless, my services were not to be withheld from it on that account." (Augustine, cited in Spurgeon)

Deliver Me, O Lord

Psa 120:1 When I was in trouble, I called to the LORD, and he answered me.

Psa 120:2 Save me, LORD, from liars and deceivers.

Psa 120:3 You liars, what will God do to you? How will he punish you?

Psa 120:4 With a soldier's sharp arrows, with red-hot coals!

Psa 120:5 Living among you is as bad as living in Meshech or among the people of Kedar.

Psa 120:6 I have lived too long with people who hate peace!

Psa 120:7 When I speak of peace, they are for war.

Psalms 120:1-7

Psalms 120 – The Prayer and Journey of the Outsider

*Psalms 120 is the first of a series of 15 psalms each with the title, **A Song of Ascents**. The reason for this collection and arrangement is not precisely stated. Many different explanations have been given for these "degrees" or "steps" or "ascents":*

- *The Stairs of the Temple Songs.*
- *The Step Songs.*
- *The Gradual Songs.*
- *The Progression Songs.*

- *The Procession from Babylon Songs.*
- *The Pilgrim Festival Songs.*

James Montgomery Boice explained the first suggestion: "The Talmud says that the fifteen songs correspond to the fifteen steps between these courtyards (Middoth ii. 5; Succa 51b). Some have even supposed that the songs were sung by the Levites from these steps, though this is pure speculation."

Probably the best explanation is the last one listed, that these were songs for the people of God as they made the pilgrim journey to Jerusalem and the temple at the three appointed feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles).

*1Ch 13:6 uses this phrase to describe the bringing of the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem: to bring up from there the ark of God the LORD. According to Charles Spurgeon (and many others), the word we translate **ascents** shares the same root with to bring up in 1Ch 13:6. The same root word is used in the same context in 1Ch 15:15.*

"We shall consider them as songs sung by those pilgrims who went up to Jerusalem to worship.... These songs of desire, and hope, and approach are appropriate for the pilgrims' use as they go up to worship." (G. Campbell Morgan) This being likely so, then Jesus would have sung these songs on His many journeys to Jerusalem from Galilee.

"The author of these fifteen Psalms is not known; and most probably they were not the work of one person. They have been attributed to David, to Solomon, to Ezra, to Haggai, to Zechariah, and to Malachi, without any positive evidence. They are, however, excellent in their kind, and written with much elegance; containing strong and nervous sentiments of the most exalted piety, expressed with great felicity of language in a few words." (Adam Clarke)

A. The distress and destiny of liars who oppose.

1. (1-2) Distress and deliverance from deceitful tongues.

In my distress I cried to the LORD,

And He heard me.

Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips

And from a deceitful tongue.

a. **In my distress I cried to the LORD:** The people of God often find themselves in **distress**. They have a refuge in their distress; they can do as the psalmist did when he **cried to the LORD**. They can share the singer's testimony, **and He heard me**.

i. **In my distress:** "Distress addeth wings to our devotions. Our Saviour, being in agony, prayed more earnestly, Luk 22:44. So do all his members, and especially when they lie under the lash of a lying tongue, as here." (Trapp)

ii. **I cried to the LORD:** "It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we stir in it the more it spreads; it is of no avail to appeal to the honour of the slanderers, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult." (Spurgeon)

iii. **And He heard me:** The psalmist remembered God's past faithfulness in his present need. "Devout hearts argue that what Jehovah has done once He will do again. Since His mercy endureth forever, He will not weary of bestowing, nor will former gifts exhaust His stores. Men say, 'I have given so often that I can give no more'; God says, 'I have given, therefore I will give.'" (Maclaren)

iv. "When we are slandered it is a joy that the Lord knows us, and cannot be made to doubt our

uprightness. He will not hear the lie against us, but he will hear our prayer against the lie.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips:** The psalmist described the nature of his distress – evil words spoken against him from **lying lips** and **a deceitful tongue**.

i. There was some comfort in this cry, knowing that the evil that was spoken against the singer *was not true*. It was spoken with **lying lips** and with a **deceitful tongue**.

ii. The lies our soul needs deliverance from are not only the lies said *about* us, but also the lies said *to us* – lies about God, lies about man, lies about ourself, lies about life, identity, purpose, and happiness. From *these* lies, **deliver my soul, O LORD**.

2. (3-4) *The destiny of the deceitful tongue.*

**What shall be given to you,
Or what shall be done to you,
You false tongue?
Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With coals of the broom tree!**

a. **What shall be given to you:** The psalmist shifted from his prayer to God to speak to the **false tongue** of those who caused him distress. He warned those lying lips of their destiny, of **what shall be done to you**.

i. In light of the judgment described in these verses, it is worth remembering that “...a false tongue is likened to a sharp razor, Psa 52:2-4; to a sharp sword, Psa 57:4; to sharp arrows, Pro 26:18-19.” (Trapp)

b. **Sharp arrows of the warrior:** The **false tongue** of the singer’s enemies would soon know **sharp arrows**. They had cast out lies like dangerous missiles, and now

the **sharp arrows** of judgment would come against them.

i. These are "...punishments justly inflicted on a tongue, the words of which have been keen and killing as arrows, and which, by its lies and calumnies, hath contributed to set the world on fire." (Horne)

ii. Clarke suggested that the picture here is of *flaming arrows* or *fiery darts* (Eph 6:16): "*Fiery arrows, or arrows wrapped about with inflamed combustibles*, were formerly used in sieges to set the places on fire."

iii. "The liar, wounding though his weapons are, will be destroyed with far more potent shafts than lies: God's *arrows* of truth and *coals* of judgment." (Kidner)

B. Living in a troubled place, longing for God's peace.

1. (5-6) *The weariness of living with those who hate God's shalom.*

**Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
My soul has dwelt too long
With one who hates peace.**

a. **Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech:** **Meshech** was a distant place, far from the land of Israel (Eze 27:13; Eze 32:26; Eze 39:1). **Kedar** was a place associated with the nomadic tribes in the lands surrounding Israel (Isa 21:16-17, Jer 49:28).

i. "Meshech was the name of [a group of] barbarous tribes who, in the times of Sargon and Sennacherib inhabited the highlands to the east of Cilicia, and in later days retreated northwards to the neighbourhood of the Black Sea.... Kedar was one of the Bedouin tribes of the Arabian desert." (Maclaren)

ii. "These two peoples were located so far apart geographically that they can only be taken here as 'a general term for the heathen.' No one person could have lived among both. They are examples of warlike tribes, among whom the singers of Psalms 120 had no true home." (Boice)

iii. "The verbs 'dwell' (*garti*, 'sojourn') and 'live' (*sakanti*, 'tabernacle,' 'dwell') are significantly chosen. Even though the psalmist may have enjoyed a permanent residence, he felt as if he was no more than a sojourner among his contemporaries. He did not feel at home among an ungodly people." (VanGemeren)

b. My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace: The psalmist ached because he lived among the ungodly and was distant from Israel and its people. He longed for God's *shalom* (**peace**); his enemies, who had lying lips, hated God's *shalom*.

i. This was a *good* discontentment. "Contentment in the place where deceit is practiced, and strife is loved, is base contentment. Men of faith must there find the distress which inspires the cry to God." (Morgan)

ii. "The very society of such (be they ever so tame and civil) is tedious and unsavoury to a good soul; like the slime and filth that is congealed when many toads and other vermin join together." (Trapp)

iii. God can work good even in the troubles of difficult company. "And remember, there is a compensation, in that the strict scrutiny of thy foes makes thee ever so much more watchful and prayerful, and drives thee oftener to the bosom of God." (Meyer)

iv. This makes Psalms 120 a fitting start to the Songs of Ascents. As the pilgrim journey to Jerusalem

began, the author was mindful of the weariness endured living apart from the supportive community of God's people. The psalmist *needed* this trip to Jerusalem at feast time and *needed* the larger community of the people of God.

2. (7) *The contrast between the singer and the community where he lives.*

I am for peace;

But when I speak, they are for war.

a. **I am for peace:** He loved and longed for God's **peace**, His *shalom*.

i. **I am for peace:** "Properly, 'I am peace'; desirous of peace, peaceful, forbearing, in fact, peace itself." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The clause 'I am a man of peace' translates a nominal phrase: 'I peace.' In his whole being the psalmist longs for the establishment of peace." (VanGemeren)

iii. "Jesus was a man of peace...he lived to make peace 'by the blood of his cross;' he died to complete it." (Pierce, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **When I speak, they are for war:** The psalmist sought to speak words of peace and goodness, to represent and promote those values in our own community. Yet every time he did, the response was hostile, characteristic of those who **are for war**.

i. At least for a while, he needed better company – and he would find it among the pilgrims who came to Jerusalem and who shared in these *Songs of Ascents*.

ii. "So the psalm ends as with a long-drawn sigh. It inverts the usual order of similar psalms, in which the description of need is wont to precede the prayer for

deliverance. It thus sets forth most pathetically the sense of discordance between a man and his environment, which urges the soul that feels it to seek a better home. So this is a true pilgrim psalm.”
(Maclaren)

My Help Comes from the Lord

Psa 121:1 I look to the mountains; where will my help come from?

Psa 121:2 My help will come from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Psa 121:3 He will not let you fall; your protector is always awake.

Psa 121:4 The protector of Israel never dozes or sleeps.

Psa 121:5 The LORD will guard you; he is by your side to protect you.

Psa 121:6 The sun will not hurt you during the day, nor the moon during the night.

Psa 121:7 The LORD will protect you from all danger; he will keep you safe.

Psa 121:8 He will protect you as you come and go now and forever.

Psalms 121:1-8

Psalms 121 – The God Who Keeps and Helps

*This is the second of the series of psalms which are titled **A Song of Ascents**. As a song sung by travelers, this is particularly relevant for the trust placed in God through the journey.*

"David Livingstone, the famous missionary and explorer of the continent of Africa, read Psalms 121 and Psalms 135, which praises God for his sovereign rule over all things, as he worshiped with his father and sister before setting out for Africa in 1840. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Moffat, wrote

him at Linyardi that Psalms 121 was always in her mind as she thought about and prayed for him.” (James Montgomery Boice)

A. Help from the LORD, the Creator of all and helper of Israel.

1. (1-2) Help from Yahweh.

**I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?
My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.**

a. **I will lift up my eyes to the hills:** The singer of this psalm looked **to the hills**, likely the distant **hills** of Jerusalem as he travelled toward the city to fulfill his pilgrimage.

i. “The singer is still far from the appointed place of worship, lifting his eyes toward the distant mountains. He is not far from Jehovah, however. In Jehovah’s keeping, even though far from the center of external worship, the pilgrim realizes his safety.” (Morgan)

ii. The point is wonderful. The singer understood that the group didn’t need to arrive at Jerusalem before they came under God’s protective care. He would watch over them on the journey. God is just as present in the journey as in the destination.

iii. There are two other suggestions of what was intended by this looking **up** to the **hills**, though they are less likely.

- Some suggest this was a consideration of the *high places* where idolaters set their altars (Num 22:41, Deu 33:29, 1Ki 12:31).

- Some suggest this was an *anxious* look to the hills, looking for danger and threats from often-present

robbers and gangs.

b. **My help comes from the LORD:** The traveller looked to Jerusalem as his goal, yet his trust was not in that city itself. **Help** would come from the God **who made heaven and earth**. The Creator would be his helper.

i. "The sole source of 'help' comes from Yahweh, who, as Creator, has unlimited power." (VanGemeren)

ii. "What he is telling us is that his gaze did not stop when he looked upward to the hills but that he looked beyond them to God, who made the mountains." (Boice)

iii. "The City of God, and the Temple, are to be desired and delighted in; the mountains upon which they rest are to be remembered. But not from them does help come to distressed souls; it comes from Jehovah." (Morgan)

2. (3-4) The help God brings.

He will not allow your foot to be moved;

He who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold, He who keeps Israel

Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

a. **He will not allow your foot to be moved:** God would help His people by establishing them in a firm place, allowing them to stand and not allowing their **foot to be moved**.

i. "The foundation, God's infinite power and goodness, on which thou standest, cannot be moved; and whilst thou standest on this basis, thy foot cannot be moved." (Clarke)

ii. "Our feet shall move in progress, but they shall not be moved to their overthrow." (Spurgeon)

iii. For the Christian, this reminds us of the principles found in Eph 6:11; Eph 6:13 – that the believer is to find a place to *stand*, and this can only be done by looking to the Lord and trusting the One who **will not allow your foot to be moved**.

iv. The standing of the believer in Jesus is impressive.

- We stand in grace (Rom 5:2).
- We stand in the gospel (1Co 15:1).
- We stand in courage and strength (1Co 16:13).
- We stand in faith (2Co 1:24).
- We stand in Christian liberty (Gal 5:1).
- We stand in Christian unity (Php 1:27).
- We stand in the Lord (Php 4:1).
- The goal: We will stand perfect and complete in the will of God (Col 4:12).

b. **He who keeps you:** This is the first of six times in this short psalm that the Hebrew word *shamar* (translated **keeps** and **preserve**) is used. The theme is that God will watch over His people as a watchman watches over the city or the party of travelers.

i. "This psalmist is so absorbed in the thought of his Keeper that he barely names his dangers. With happy assurance of protection, he says over and over again the one word which is his amulet against foes and fears. Six times in these few verses does the thought recur that Jehovah is the Keeper of Israel or of the single soul." (Maclaren)

ii. "The Divine Being represents himself as a *watchman*, who takes care of the city and its inhabitants during the night-watches; and who is

never overtaken with slumbering or sleepiness.”
(Clarke)

c. **He who keeps you will not slumber:** When we look to the LORD, we have confidence in the fact that God does not sleep. The idea is repeated in verse 4 for emphasis. God’s watchful eye is always open, looking with love and care upon His people.

i. In his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah mocked the idol prophets when Baal did not respond, saying of Baal *perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened* (1Ki 18:27). We have the great comfort in knowing that **He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.**

ii. This promise was especially meaningful for the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. “Their daily march and their nightly encampment will then be placed under the care of Jehovah, who will hold up their feet unwearied on the road and watch unslumbering over their repose.” (Maclaren)

iii. “A poor woman, as the Eastern story has it, came to the Sultan one day, and asked compensation for the loss of some property. ‘How did you lose it?’ said the monarch. ‘I fell asleep,’ was the reply, ‘and a robber entered my dwelling.’ ‘Why did you fall asleep?’.... ‘I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake.’ The Sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman, that he ordered her loss to be made up.” (McMichael, cited in Spurgeon)

B. The care of the LORD for His people.

1. (5-6) *The LORD brings relief from the sun.*

The LORD is your keeper;

The LORD is your shade at your right hand.

**The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.**

a. **The LORD is your shade at your right hand:** The brutal rays of the sun in the world of the Middle East could assault the traveler, such as the pilgrim on the way to one of Israel's feasts in Jerusalem. God promised care for the traveler, with a reference that goes back to the cloud by day that followed Israel in the wilderness from Egypt and shielded them from the sun.

i. Similar promises are made in other verses such as Isa 4:6; Isa 25:4. Psa 91:1 is especially precious, with **shade** being the same word as "shadow": *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

ii. **Your shade:** "...both to refresh thee and keep thee from the burning heat of the sun, as it is expressed in the next verse, and to protect thee by his power from all thine enemies; for which reason God is oft called a *shadow* in Scripture." (Poole)

b. **Nor the moon by night:** Any superstitious fears they may have had from the light of the moon were of no concern to those whom God protected. He would keep and preserve His people day and night.

i. "What the psalmist really means, though in figurative language, is that nothing either of the day or night can harm us if God is keeping guard. God is our covering against every calamity. He is our shade against the visible perils of the day as well as the hidden perils of the night." (Boice)

ii. "God has not made a new sun or a fresh moon for his chosen, they exist under the same outward circumstances as others, but the power to smite is in their case removed from temporal agencies; saints

are enriched, and not injured, by the powers which govern the earth's condition." (Spurgeon)

iii. "But let the pope be the sun and the emperor the moon (as the canonists called them), yet the sun shall not smite the Church by day nor the moon by night. Luther was at the same time excommunicated by the pope and proscribed by the emperor; yet died he in his bed." (Trapp)

2. (7-8) *God preserves His people.*

The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;

He shall preserve your soul.

The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in

From this time forth, and even forevermore.

a. **The LORD shall preserve you from all evil:** The singer had great confidence in God's protecting power. **Evil** men may come and afflict the child of God, but the **LORD shall preserve your soul.**

i. "'All evil' will be averted from him who has Jehovah for his keeper; therefore, if any so called Evil comes, he may be sure that it is Good with a veil on." (Maclaren)

ii. "In the light of other scriptures, to be kept *from all evil* does not imply a cushioned life, but a well-armed one." (Kidner)

iii. **He shall preserve your soul:** "Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory." (Spurgeon)

iv. **The LORD shall preserve...He shall preserve.... The LORD shall preserve:** "Three

times have we the phrase, 'Jehovah shall keep,' as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise?" (Spurgeon)

b. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in: The promise is comprehensive. God's people may trust in His preserving power for all of one's activity (**going out** and **coming in**) and at all times (**from this time forth, and even forevermore**).

i. "When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping. Our exits and our entrances are under one protection." (Spurgeon)

ii. "*Your going out and your coming in* is not only a way of saying 'everything'...in closer detail it draws attention to one's ventures and enterprises (cf.

Psa 126:6), and to the home which remains one's base; again, to pilgrimage and return." (Kidner)

iii. "He has not led me so tenderly thus far to forsake me at the very gate of heaven." (Adoniram Judson, cited in Spurgeon)

Let Us Go to the House of the Lord

Psa 122:1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the LORD's house."

Psa 122:2 And now we are here, standing inside the gates of Jerusalem!

Psa 122:3 Jerusalem is a city restored in beautiful order and harmony.

Psa 122:4 This is where the tribes come, the tribes of Israel, to give thanks to the LORD according to his command.

Psa 122:5 Here the kings of Israel sat to judge their people.

Psa 122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you prosper.

Psa 122:7 May there be peace inside your walls and safety in your palaces."

Psa 122:8 For the sake of my relatives and friends I say to Jerusalem, "Peace be with you!"

Psa 122:9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God I pray for your prosperity.

Psalms 122:1-9

Psalms 122 – Coming to the House of the LORD and the City of God

*Psalms 122 carries the title **A Song of Ascents. Of David.** It is one of the four Songs of Ascents that is specifically attributed to King David. He wrote it both for what Jerusalem was in his day, and for what it would become under his son and their successors. David perhaps never made pilgrimage from a great distance to one of the major feasts, but he wrote Psalms 122 in the voice of one who did, and who had arrived at the Holy City.*

"David wrote it for the people to sing at the time of their goings up to the holy feasts at Jerusalem. It comes third in the series, and appears to be suitable to be sung when the people had entered the gates, and their feet stood within the city." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. Coming to Jerusalem.

1. (1) The joy of coming to God's house.

**I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go into the house of the LORD."**

a. **I was glad when they said to me:** David had in mind both the community (**when they said**) and the individual (**I was glad**). He pictured the individual coming together with the group to **go into the house of the LORD**. That invitation and the acceptance of it made him **glad**.

i. Boice reflected on David's possible motive in writing Psalms 122 : "It is reasonable to suppose that he wrote it both to express joy in his new capital city and to encourage love for and loyalty toward it as the focal point of the nation's political life and worship."

b. **Let us go into the house of the LORD:** During David's days there was never a temple, but he knew one would be built, having extensively planned and prepared for it (1Ch 22:2-16). It's possible that David wrote here of the pilgrimage to the tabernacle, which did exist in his day and was regarded as the **house of the LORD**. It's more likely that David wrote this psalm in anticipation of the pilgrims who would come to the **house of the LORD** built by Solomon.

i. It is wonderful to think of David's extensive preparation for the people of Israel to come to the temple, especially for the required feasts three times a year.

ii. "That House was supreme in importance because it was the House of Jehovah. Jehovah, the God of Grace, is the One around Whom the people gather." (Morgan)

c. **Let us go into the house of the LORD:** Coming to God's house made David happy, though he knew that no building could contain God in all His glory and greatness. At **the house of the LORD** he could focus his thoughts, prayers, worship, and receiving of God's word in the

community of God's people in a special way, and David was **glad** for that.

i. Too many don't know the gladness David sang of, either because they don't **go into the house of the LORD**, or because they do go and it isn't a **glad** thing for them.

ii. We should **go into the house of the LORD**. It is good and important for us to gather with God's people for prayers, worship, and receiving of God's word. The gathering should be formal and ordered *enough* so that it is regarded as a gathering of God's **house** – not everyone doing their own thing, but God's people coming together for His glory and their benefit in His house.

iii. Our going to God's **house** should be a **glad** thing. This isn't the same as saying it should be *entertaining*, especially in an age when entertainment is a dangerous idol. Not everything that happens at the **house of the LORD** must be *fun*, but it should all be *good*, both welcoming to the not-yet-believer and good for those who are believers in Jesus.

iv. If going to the **house of the LORD** is not a **glad** thing, the problem may be in the heart of the one who comes or it may be in what happens at the house of the LORD – but the problem should be prayerfully diagnosed and lovingly addressed.

2. (2) *The happy arrival.*

**Our feet have been standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem!**

a. **Our feet have been standing within your gates:** Most regard this as David's description of the joyful statement of the pilgrim who has finally arrived. The

most important aspect is the evident joy and gladness at coming to the destination.

i. "This is the song of the singer, no longer distanced from the City, and Temple, but having arrived therein. It is the song of first impressions." (Morgan)

b. **Within your gates, O Jerusalem:** They came to **Jerusalem** because that was where David set up the tabernacle and where the ark of the covenant and the altar of sacrifice were. Later, Solomon built the temple in **Jerusalem** that David planned and prepared for.

B. Describing Jerusalem.

1. (3-4) *A prosperous, unified city.*

Jerusalem is built

As a city that is compact together,

Where the tribes go up,

The tribes of the LORD,

To the Testimony of Israel,

To give thanks to the name of the LORD.

a. **Jerusalem is built:** David had conquered the city of Jerusalem, taking it from the Jebusites who held it as a Canaanite stronghold. He **built** the city in his own day, and David rejoiced in declaring, **Jerusalem is built.**

i. "It matters not how wicked or degraded a place may have been in former times, when it is sanctified to the use and service of God it becomes honourable. Jerusalem was formerly Jebus – a place where the Jebusites committed their abominations, and where were all the miseries of those who hasten after another God. But now, since it is devoted to God's service, it is a city – 'compact together,' 'the joy of the whole earth.'" (Plumer, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **A city that is compact together:** David's city of Jerusalem was not large, but it was not a disordered

collection of tents and shacks. It was **built**, and built together in an orderly way (**compact together**). It was a real city.

i. "During David's reign and for some time thereafter, Jerusalem was a small city located on the crest of Mount Zion and Mount Moriah, bounded on two sides by steep descents to the Kidron and Tyropaeon valleys, and thus no more than half a mile in breadth. It had a dramatic setting for one approaching it from a distance, and its tight structure would have impressed anyone observing it." (Boice)

ii. "Furthermore, it is not erected as a set of booths, or a conglomeration of hovels, but as a city, substantial, architectural, designed, arranged, and defended." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The expression '*bound firmly together*' [**compact together**] uses...the same verb as is found in the instructions for making the tent of worship: 'couple the tent together that it may be one whole' (Exo 26:11). Such was the blueprint; such will be the ultimate reality (Rev 21:10 ff.)." (Kidner)

iv. "A church should be one in creed and one in heart, one in testimony and one in service, one in aspiration and one in sympathy. They greatly injure our Jerusalem who would build dividing walls within her; she needs compacting, not dividing." (Spurgeon)

c. **Where the tribes go up:** One of the reasons David conquered Jerusalem and established it as the capital of both the political and religious life of Israel was because it did not previously belong to a specific tribe, being under Canaanite occupation. Since it belonged to no tribe, it belonged to all the tribes, and the **tribes of the LORD** could come together as one at Jerusalem and the house of the LORD.

i. "Note that Israel was one people, but yet it was in a sense divided by the mere surface distinction of tribes; and this may be a lesson to us that all Christendom is essentially one, though from various causes we are divided into tribes. Let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the national unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body." (Spurgeon)

ii. Christians today should reflect this same unity even with their diversity. "There is no such oneness in all the world as among true Christians; and this the very heathens observed and commended. As the curtains of the tabernacle were joined by loops, so were they by love. And as the stones of the temple were so close cemented together that they seemed to be all but one stone, so was it among the primitive saints." (Trapp)

iii. "Wherever my brethren meet, in whatever section of the Church on earth, so long as they belong to the one Church, the Body of Christ, nothing shall stay me from wishing them prosperity and peace. They may not recognize me here, but five minutes in Heaven will do away with all these earthly estrangements." (Meyer)

d. **To the Testimony of Israel:** This describes the ark of the covenant, which was often called by this title (Exo 25:22, Exo 27:21, Num 1:53). Representing the throne of God and His presence in Israel, **the Testimony of Israel** was the center of the tabernacle and later the temple.

i. Matthew Poole explained why the ark of the covenant was sometimes called **the Testimony of Israel**: "...the tables of the covenant [were] laid up in

it, which are called God's testimony, and the tables of the testimony."

ii. Many commentators (such as Adam Clarke) regard this psalm as written by and for exiles returning from the Babylonian captivity. The reference to the ark of the **Testimony** argues against that idea, because it was *not* part of the temple when the exiles returned.

e. **To give thanks to the name of the LORD:** The primary purpose of the feasts of Israel was for the people of God to come together and give Him **thanks**. Their appreciation for what He had done gave them faith for what He would do in the future.

i. "Note that the object of these pilgrim feasts was *to give thanks*, not primarily to seek unity or prosperity. These were gifts over and above the occasion, not its *raison d'être*; whereas pagan worship was all too blatantly a means to securing what one wanted: cf. Hos 2:5." (Kidner)

ii. "The unity of the city reflected the unity of the tribes on these special occasions. The Israelite tribes came together for the purpose of praising 'the name of the Lord'. It was an act of loyalty, as the Lord had commanded them to present themselves before him." (VanGemeren)

2. (5) *A city of justice and righteous rule.*

**For thrones are set there for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.**

a. **For thrones are set there for judgment:** As the seat of government for Israel, Jerusalem was where their main courts **for judgment** were established. Jerusalem was to be a city of *justice*, where good was honored and where evil was corrected.

i. These **thrones** were for dispensing judgment, and may have been visible at the gates of the city (Rth 4:1-12, Mat 19:28).

b. **The thrones of the house of David:** David's **house** was established to reign over Israel. Saul's house never reigned, supplying really only one king. David's lineage reigned in Jerusalem and will forever reign in the Messiah, the Son of David.

C. Praying for Jerusalem.

1. (6-8) *The exhortation to pray and the prayer itself.*

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

"May they prosper who love you.

Peace be within your walls,

Prosperity within your palaces."

For the sake of my brethren and companions,

I will now say, "Peace *be* within you."

a. **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:** David exhorted pilgrims coming to the Holy City to **pray for the peace** of the city. Jerusalem's name itself marks it as the city of peace (Heb 7:2), but in reality it has known much war and conflict, which continue to this day. It is good to **pray** for the often-elusive **peace of Jerusalem**.

i. "In a church one of the main ingredients of success is internal peace: strife, suspicion, party-spirit, division, – these are deadly things. Those who break the peace of the church deserve to suffer, and those who sustain it win a great blessing." (Spurgeon)

b. **May they prosper who love you:** David continued by giving a prayer for Jerusalem. The prayer included a blessing for those who **love** the city, and a direct request for **peace** and **prosperity** for the city.

i. Kidner on **peace** and **prosperity**: "They are the proper fruits of justice, the subject of verse 5."

ii. "The word 'prosper' conveys an idea which is not in the original. The Hebrew word means to be secure, tranquil, at rest, spoken especially of one who enjoys quiet prosperity: Job 3:26; Job 12:6. The essential idea is that of quietness or rest; and the meaning here is, that those who love Zion will have peace." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "This is the *form of prayer* that they are to use: 'May *prosperity* ever reside within thy walls, on all the people that dwell there; and tranquillity within thy palaces or high places, among the *rulers* and *governors* of the people.'" (Clarke)

c. For the sake of my brethren and companions:

David prayed for blessings for those who loved and prayed for Jerusalem, but the blessing was not only for the individual but for the community of those who cared for the peace of Jerusalem, those who said, "**Peace be within you.**"

i. A "play of words lies in the interchange of 'peace' and 'prosperity,' which are closely similar in sound in the Hebrew." (Maclaren)

ii. "The repetition of the desire displays the writer's high valuation of the blessing mentioned; he would not again and again have invoked peace had he not perceived its extreme desirableness." (Spurgeon)

2. (9) The reason to pray and to seek good for Jerusalem.

**Because of the house of the LORD our God
I will seek your good.**

a. **Because of the house of the LORD our God:** David understood that the gladness and goodness of the pilgrim toward God's city was not primarily political in nature. It wasn't because of loyalty to a political party, leader, or

philosophy. It was because **the house of the LORD** was established there.

i. "The Psalmist declareth the two motives, which induced him to utter his best wishes, and use his best endeavours, for the prosperity of Jerusalem; namely, love of his brethren, whose happiness was involved in that of their city; and love of God, who had there fixed the residence of his glory." (Horne)

ii. "Through it all it is evident that the glory of city and Temple consists in the fact that they are the city and house of Jehovah. It is not a song of buildings or of material magnificence. It is rather the song of assembly, of testimony, of judgment, of peace, of prosperity. These all issue from the supreme fact of Jehovah's presence." (Morgan)

iii. This has a special application for the Christian under the New Covenant. For us, the church is the **house of the LORD**, with Jesus the Head and Son of the house (Heb 3:5-6, Heb 10:21, 1Pe 2:5, 1Pe 4:17). What makes the church special is that it is *God's* habitation, *His* house. His presence makes it special.

iv. Ancient Jerusalem had political, economic, and social importance. Yet the most important reason to love and care for Jerusalem was because of **the house of the LORD**. Christians should have the same great care for and focus upon the work of God's house.

b. **I will seek your good:** Just as it was good for pilgrims in Israel to **seek** the good of Jerusalem *for the sake of God's house*, so Christians today can and should **seek** the **good** of society for the sake of God's house.

i. **I will seek:** "It is not a careless, loose seeking after it, almost as indifferently as a woman seeks after a pin which she has dropped; no, no; effort is implied." (Irons, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "First we love it (verse 6) and then we labour for it, as in this passage: we see its good, and then seek its good." (Spurgeon)

Our Eyes Look to the Lord Our God

Psa 123:1 LORD, I look up to you, up to heaven, where you rule.

Psa 123:2 As a servant depends on his master, as a maid depends on her mistress, so we will keep looking to you, O LORD our God, until you have mercy on us.

Psa 123:3 Be merciful to us, LORD, be merciful; we have been treated with so much contempt.

Psa 123:4 We have been mocked too long by the rich and scorned by proud oppressors.

Psalms 123:1-4

Psalms 123 – Looking to the LORD for Mercy in Affliction

*This psalm is simply titled **A Song of Ascents**. It is another in the series of psalms sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem at feast time. These songs give us a pattern of preparation to meet with God and His people.*

"This Psalm (as ye see) is but short, and therefore a very fit example to show the force of prayer not to consist in many words, but in fervency of spirit. For great and weighty matters may be comprised in a few words, if they proceed from the spirit and the unspeakable groanings of the heart, especially when our necessity is such as will not suffer any long prayer. Every prayer is long enough if it be fervent and

proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints.” (Martin Luther, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. The afflicted looks to the LORD.

1. (1) Where to look.

**Unto You I lift up my eyes,
O You who dwell in the heavens.**

a. **Unto You I lift up my eyes:** The psalmist declares his intention and action – to lift up his eyes to the LORD. This means that his eyes are not on his circumstances or himself, but on the LORD.

i. “It is good to have some one to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. Not to the hills, but to the God of the hills he looked.” (Spurgeon)

b. **O You who dwell in the heavens:** By remembering where God is, the psalmist grows in trust and confidence. Earth may have no mercy or help, but heaven has plenty of mercy and help.

i. We see a progression in these Psalms of Ascent, beginning with Psalms 120.

- In Psalms 120 we lament our surroundings.
- In Psalms 121 we lift our eyes to the hills of Zion.
- In Psalms 122 we delight in the house of the LORD.
- In Psalms 123 we look above the hills to the LORD in heaven.

ii. “The goal of the pilgrim is not Jerusalem, as important as that city was, or even the temple in Jerusalem, as important as it was, but God himself, whose true throne is not anywhere on earth but in heaven.” (Boice)

2. (2) How to look.

**Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their masters,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes *look* to the LORD our God,
Until He has mercy on us.**

a. **As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters:** The example pictures a waiter or a butler standing behind his master seated at dinner. The servant looks to the hand of his master for the slightest indication of need or want, to instantly meet the need. With that same intensity, devotion, and steadfastness, the psalmist looks to God.

i. "They should stand where they can see Him; they should have their gaze fixed upon Him; they should look with patient trust, as well as with eager willingness to start into activity when He indicates His commands." (Maclaren)

ii. "This is not an endorsement of slavery, of course. It is a way of saying that the disciple's dependence on God and submission to God should be no less total than the most obedient servant of an earthly master." (Boice)

iii. Morgan says the picture of the servants looking to the hands of the master suggests at least three things:

- *Dependence*: The hands of the master provide all that is needed.
- *Submission*: The hands of the master direct the servant's work.
- *Discipline*: The hands of the master correct the servant.

iv. "Here, then, is the true way of looking for help from Jehovah. It is that of dependence, obedience,

and response to correction.” (Morgan)

b. **So our eyes look to the LORD our God:** The psalmist *waited* to mention God by name, so as to build a sense of anticipation. The looking is fully described before the One looked to is named.

i. “The psalmist creates a suspense by drawing out the use of the divine name.” (VanGemeren)

ii. “Do we look to God like that – reverently, obediently, attentively, continuously, expectantly, singly, submissively, imploringly? Probably not, but we should.” (Boice)

iii. “Creation, providence, grace; these are all motions of Jehovah’s hand, and from each of them a portion of our duty is to be learned; therefore should we carefully study them, to discover the divine will.” (Spurgeon)

iv. “We have too long acted on our own initiative; let us wait on our exalted Lord for the indication of his will.” (Meyer)

c. **Until He has mercy on us:** This is how long the psalmist will focus his attention toward the LORD. He does not demand an immediate answer, but will persevere patiently until the LORD extends His mercy.

B. The afflicted pleads for mercy.

1. (3) The request for mercy.

Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us!

For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

a. **Have mercy on us:** The psalmist wasn’t content to only wait for mercy; he begged for it. He demonstrated that waiting on the LORD is not a passive thing. He repeated the request for **mercy**, showing the intensity of

his plea. The Master he looked to would look upon him and help.

b. **For we are exceedingly filled with contempt:** The psalmist needed God's intervention and mercy because he felt filled with the contempt put on him by others.

i. **Exceedingly filled:** "The Hebrew word here used means "to be saturated"; to have the appetite fully satisfied – as applied to one who is hungry or thirsty. Then it comes to mean to be entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be; they could experience no more." (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. Sometimes others show contempt to us, and it just rolls off like drops of water. Other times we take contempt from others and we let it fill us – sometimes until we are **exceedingly filled**. These times lay us low and make us feel that only the mercy of God can save us.

iii. **Contempt:** "It is illuminating that *contempt* is singled out for mention. Other things can bruise, but this is cold steel. It goes deeper into the spirit than any other form of rejection." (Kidner)

2. (4) *The reason mercy is needed.*

**Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scorn of those who are at ease,
With the contempt of the proud.**

a. **With the scorn of those who are at ease:** This **scorn** is never easy to bear, but it is especially painful when it comes from those who seem to be **at ease**, who seem to have few problems or difficulties in life.

i. "This had become the chief thought of their minds, the peculiar sorrow of their hearts. Excluding all other

feelings, a sense of scorn monopolized the soul and made it unutterably wretched.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “The reason people ridicule what they oppose, aside from it being so easy, is that it is demoralizing and frequently effective. It is effective because it strikes at the hidden insecurities or weaknesses that almost everybody has.” (Boice)

iii. “The injurious effect of freedom from affliction is singularly evident here. Place a man perfectly at ease and he derides the suffering godly, and becomes himself proud in heart and conduct.” (Spurgeon)

b. **With the contempt of the proud:** This made the contempt heaped on the psalmist even worse – knowing it came from the **proud** and arrogant. Yet the psalmist was satisfied to wait for God’s mercy.

i. “The proud think so much of themselves that they must needs think all the less of those who are better than themselves. Pride is both contemptible and contemptuous.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Nevertheless, this psalm is filled with the unspoken confidence that the mercy of God will triumph over the contempt of the proud.

iii. “This sweet psalm, with all its pained sense of the mockers’ gibes and their long duration, has no accent of impatience.” (Maclaren)

iv. Contempt “...can be an honour (Act 5:41), and it is something Christ Himself accepted and made redemptive.” (Kidner)

v. “To set the life toward worship in an ungodly age is ever to be the object of scorn and contempt. What matters it? The eyes of Jehovah’s pilgrims are lifted to the throne set high above all the tumult and strife of tongues.” (Morgan)

Our Help Is in the Name of the Lord

Psa 124:1 What if the LORD had not been on our side?
Answer, O Israel!

Psa 124:2 "If the LORD had not been on our side when our
enemies attacked us,

Psa 124:3 then they would have swallowed us alive in their
furious anger against us;

Psa 124:4 then the flood would have carried us away, the
water would have covered us,

Psa 124:5 the raging torrent would have drowned us."

Psa 124:6 Let us thank the LORD, who has not let our
enemies destroy us.

Psa 124:7 We have escaped like a bird from a hunter's
trap; the trap is broken, and we are free!

Psa 124:8 Our help comes from the LORD, who made
heaven and earth.

Psalms 124:1-8

Psalms 124 – Thanking God for the Help Only He Can Bring

*This psalm is titled **A Song of Ascents. Of David.** Psa 122:4 mentions that the pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem to give thanks. Here we see David leading Israel in giving thanks to God for past help and expressing confidence in His continuing help.*

Despite the attribution to David, several commentators connect this psalm with exiles returning from Babylon. James Montgomery Boice answered this well: "The expressions of the psalm ('when men attacked us,' 'swept us away,' 'escaped like a bird') sound more like a military attack and deliverance from it than captivity." It is best to keep the connection with David, considering it an earnest

plea for Israel to thank God for deliverance past and present.

"In the year 1582, this Psalm was sung on a remarkable occasion in Edinburgh. An imprisoned minister, John Durie, had been set free, and was met and welcomed on entering the town by two hundred of his friends. The number increased till he found himself in the midst of a company of two thousand, who began to sing, as they moved up the long High Street, 'Now Israel may say,' etc. They sang in four parts with deep solemnity, all joining in the well-known tune and Psalm. They were much moved themselves, and so were all who heard; and one of the chief persecutors is said to have been more alarmed at this sight and song than at anything he had seen in Scotland." (Horatius Bonar, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. Gratitude for God's help.

1. (1-2) The help of God when under the threat of men.

**"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,"
Let Israel now say—**

**"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
When men rose up against us,"**

a. **If it had not been the LORD who was on our side:** Twice in the first two verses of this psalm, David called Israel to recognize that their help was in God alone. It wasn't just that Yahweh was present, but that He actively worked on behalf of His people (**on our side**).

i. "The phrase 'had been on our side' (*hayah lanu*) is the past tense of Immanuel ('God is with us'). Thus the community confesses that God has been with them in their past history." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Here is an If which cannot be an *if*. It is never a matter of uncertainty whether the Lord will be on our

side or not. For the Lord Jesus in His incarnation and death has taken His place beside us forevermore. He is always on our side, so long as we keep His paths and walk in His ways." (Meyer)

iii. "This repetition is not in vain. For whilst we are in danger, our fear is without measure; but when it is once past, we imagine it to have been less than it was indeed. And this is the delusion of Satan, to diminish and obscure the grace of God." (Luther, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Let Israel now say:** David thought it necessary that *all* God's covenant people recognize this. It wasn't enough for he or a few others to do this; it was the duty of all **Israel** to know and to **say** that God was their absolutely essential help.

c. **When men rose up against us:** There were many times in David's reign and before when this was true, but perhaps the most likely time referred to here was when the Philistines threatened to overwhelm Israel at the start of David's reign (2Sa 5:17-25). When **men** opposed the people of God, God stepped in to help.

i. "As a psalm of David, this gives us a rare insight into the early peril of his kingdom, particularly from the Philistines, who had thought to see the last of Israel when they shattered the kingdom of Saul. 2Sa 5:17 ff. shows how serious the threat was, and how little confidence David placed in his own power to survive it." (Kidner)

ii. "It is easy to see how a psalm praising God's protection from the early days of Israel's national history might be incorporated into the songs pilgrims sang on their way to Jerusalem, which David had made his capital." (Boice)

2. (3-5) *The disaster that could have happened had not God helped.*

**"Then they would have swallowed us alive,
When their wrath was kindled against us;
Then the waters would have overwhelmed us,
The stream would have gone over our soul;
Then the swollen waters
Would have gone over our soul."**

a. Then they would have swallowed us alive:

Continuing the thought from the emphatic repetition in the first two verses (if God had not helped Israel), David tells of what have happened: they would have been destroyed by their enemies. Yahweh wasn't one of many possible solutions to their problem; He and He alone was their savior.

i. "One thought runs through it all, that the sole actor in their deliverance has been Jehovah. No human arm has been bared for them; no created might could have rescued them from the rush of the swelling deluge." (Maclaren)

ii. "We have often involved ourselves in entanglements, through our own disobedience; but we have never been able to extricate ourselves from them. Escape has always come by His action." (Morgan)

iii. **Their wrath was kindled against us:** "Anger is never more fiery than when the people of God are its objects. Sparks become flames, and the furnace is heated seven times hotter when God's elect are to be thrust into the blaze." (Spurgeon)

b. Then the waters would have overwhelmed us:

David poetically described their potential ruin. The

danger was like being **swallowed** alive by a giant beast, or like being drowned when waters **overwhelmed**.

i. "The metaphor of water as a destructive force is common in the Old Testament (cf. Psa 18:16; Psa 42:7; Psa 69:1-2; Psa 69:15; Isa 8:7-8; Lam 3:54) because of the destructive torrential rains known to that part of the world." (VanGemenen)

c. **Then the swollen waters:** The idea here is of a rushing river, not the rising flood. In the poetic picture, they were in danger of being swept away by the torrent.

d. **Gone over our soul:** David again used repetition to emphasize the idea that the danger was not only political or economic; it had to do with the very soul, with *life* at the deepest levels. From these great dangers, God was their deliverer.

i. David poetically described many of the troubles that face our **soul**:

- Sometimes our troubles swallow and devour us.
- Sometimes our troubles overwhelm us like a flood.
- Sometimes our troubles sweep us away like a torrent.

B. Praise to the LORD who helps.

1. (6-7) Praise for the help received.

Blessed be the LORD,

Who has not given us as prey to their teeth.

Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers;

The snare is broken, and we have escaped.

a. **Blessed be the LORD:** As in other places in the Book of Psalms, the thought is not bestowing a blessing upon Yahweh, but on thanking, praising, and announcing Him

as **blessed**. It is a powerful expression of thanks and praise.

i. "When we look back on life, as the psalmist does here, we become aware of the myriad instances of Divine protection. We were not so vividly conscious at the time; we might even have had fits of depression and counted ourselves bereft. But if we narrowly consider the perils from which we have been rescued, when we were about to be swallowed up quick, we become convinced that He was there." (Meyer)

ii. "The redeemed are astonished, upon looking back, at the greatness of the danger to which they had been exposed." (Horne)

b. Who has not given us as prey to their teeth:

David again described their danger poetically – first as being delivered from a beast with grinding **teeth**, then as deliverance from a trap (**snare**) set for birds. With God's help, the people of God were safe from destruction and loss of liberty.

i. **Prey to their teeth:** "This is not quite the same figure as that of verse 3. In these jaws we feel the slower agonies of defeat, like the tearing and grinding of the prey." (Kidner)

ii. **As a bird from the snare:** "The comparison of the soul to a bird is beautiful [Psa 11:1]. It hints at tremors and feebleness, at alternations of feeling like the flutter of some weak-winged songster, at the utter helplessness of the panting creature in the toils." (Maclaren)

iii. "Fowlers have many methods of taking small birds, and Satan has many methods of entrapping souls. Some are decoyed by evil companions, others are enticed by the love of dainties; hunger drives many

into the trap, and fright impels numbers to fly into the net." (Spurgeon)

iv. "As the bird could not get out of the snare, so the soul cannot escape from temptation; but God can bring it out, and he works the rescue. Hear this, ye that are slaves to drunkenness: God can deliver you. You that have fallen into licentiousness hear it – God can deliver you. Whatever the sin that has birdlimed [trapped] you, that gracious hand which once was nailed to the cross can set you free." (Spurgeon)

v. "Save us, O God, from the rage and the subtlety of our spiritual adversary; save us from his teeth, when he would devour; from his snares, when he would deceive." (Horne)

vi. Here are two more poetic pictures of that which may trouble our **soul**:

- Sometimes our troubles grind us to powder.
- Sometimes our troubles capture us like a trap or snare.

2. (8) Confidence in the continuing help of God.

**Our help *is* in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.**

a. **Our help is in the name of the LORD:** We sense a bit of defiance in this declaration. The nations find their supposed help in their supposed deities; God's people confidently find their **help** in **the name of the LORD**.

i. "Experience should breed confidence...write up experiences therefore, oft rub them over, and then conclude as here." (Trapp)

ii. "The great lesson of this Psalm, from the beginning to the end...is that for every deliverance, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature, we should, in imitation of

the saints above, ascribe 'Salvation to God and the Lamb.'" (Horne)

iii. "If Jehovah had not helped, how great would have been the calamity! But He has helped, and the sigh which trembles with the consciousness of past peril, merges into the glad song: Blessed be Jehovah." (Morgan)

b. **Who made heaven and earth:** It was not a vain confidence. The same God who created

heaven and earth was mighty to help His people.

i. "When we worship the Creator let us increase our trust in our Comforter. Did he create all that we see, and can he not preserve us from evils which we cannot see?" (Spurgeon)

The Lord Surrounds His People

Psa 125:1 Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which can never be shaken, never be moved.

Psa 125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, now and forever.

Psa 125:3 The wicked will not always rule over the land of the righteous; if they did, the righteous themselves might do evil.

Psa 125:4 LORD, do good to those who are good, to those who obey your commands.

Psa 125:5 But when you punish the wicked, punish also those who abandon your ways. Peace be with Israel!

Psalms 125:1-5

Psalms 125 – As the Mountains Surround Jerusalem

*This song is titled **A Song of Ascents**. Like the others in the series of 15 Songs of Ascents, it was especially*

appropriate for those pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for one of the three annual major feasts of Israel.

"We can imagine the pilgrims chanting this song when [walking] the city walls." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. The people of God and Mount Zion.

1. (1) The permanent standing of the people of God.

Those who trust in the LORD

Are like Mount Zion,

Which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

a. **Those who trust in the LORD:** What follows is a promise made to those who put their **trust in the LORD**. We can't properly put our trust in Him until we remove our trust in other things. He alone is our refuge and strength.

i. "The phrase, *Those who trust in the Lord*, shows one of the several facets of our relationship named in the Old Testament, along with the mention of those who 'fear', 'love' and 'know' him; a personal bond too intimate to be a passing liaison." (Kidner)

ii. "There is a false trust in Zion, a trust that does not go beyond the mere city or presumes on the commitment of God to preserve the city." (Boice)

iii. "All that deal with God must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and make it appear they do so by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations may be raised." (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "It is a good thing to understand much, and to trust in the Lord with growing knowledge, but, dear soul, if you do not know much, yet if you are trusting

in the Lord, you shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed." (Spurgeon)

b. **Are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved:** The pilgrim who came from afar was impressed with the stature and standing of **Mount Zion**, the prominent hill upon which Jerusalem was established. The one who believes and trusts in the LORD is promised the same security, and he or she **abides forever**. Our place in His love, His new life, and His gracious purpose lasts forever and **cannot be moved**.

- Some people are like the sand, ever shifting and unstable (Mat 7:26).
- Some people are like the sea, restless and unsettled (Isa 57:20, Jas 1:6).
- Some people are like the wind, uncertain and inconsistent (Eph 4:14).
- "Believers are like a mountain – strong, stable, and secure. To every soul that trusts him the Lord says, 'Thou art Peter.'" (Page, cited in Spurgeon)
 - i. "Jehovah is their rock foundation, their encompassing protection, their enthroned King. In Him is all their strength and confidence." (Morgan)
 - ii. "It is bedrock, high and secure. Moreover, it is surrounded by other mountains, which the writer compares to God, who likewise surrounds his people." (Boice)
 - iii. "Is it not strange that wicked and idolatrous powers have not joined together, dug down this mount, and carried it into the sea, that they might nullify a promise in which the people of God exult! Till ye can carry Mount Zion into the Mediterranean Sea, the church of Christ shall grow and prevail." (Clarke, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (2) *The great security of the people of God.*

**As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.**

a. **As the mountains surround Jerusalem:** Jerusalem is not set upon one hill, but established among a series of hills. God's **people** can trust that Yahweh will **surround** and protect them **as the mountains surround Jerusalem**. The pilgrim coming to Jerusalem saw these mountains and with this song made spiritual application from the geography.

b. **So the LORD surrounds His people:** God promised not only to be present with His people, but also to be *all around* them. He would **surround** them, so that nothing can get to them unless it first pass through Him.

i. **As the mountains surround Jerusalem:** "Mount Zion is not the highest peak in the mountain range around Jerusalem. To its east lies the Mount of Olives, to its north Mount Scopus, to the west and south are other hills, all of which are higher than Mount Zion. Surrounded by mountains, Mount Zion was secure, by its natural defensibility." (VanGemeren)

ii. "It is surrounded with other *mountains*, at no great distance, as if placed in the midst of an amphitheatre." (Clarke)

iii. "The mountains around the holy city, though they do not make a circular wall, are, nevertheless, set like sentinels to guard her gates. God doth not enclose his people within ramparts and bulwarks, making their city to be a prison; but yet he so orders the arrangements of his providence that his saints are as safe as if they dwelt behind the strongest fortifications." (Spurgeon)

iv. "It is a beautiful conception. Around the chosen city the mountains stood like sentinels, leaving no part without its barrier. So is God around us, and this enables us to understand how His permissions may become His appointments.... The assaults of our foes are at least permitted by God, and His permissions are His appointments." (Meyer)

v. **His people:** "We are here taught that the Lord's people are those who trust him, for they are thus described in the first verses." (Spurgeon)

b. **From this time forth and forever:** This promise *abides* for the people of God – those who trust Him (verse 1). God's surrounding protection will be with believers **forever**, even as Jesus promised His presence to His people to the end of the age (Mat 28:20).

i. "Note, it is not said that Jehovah's power or wisdom defends believers, but he himself is round about them: they have his personality for their protection, his Godhead for their guard." (Spurgeon)

ii. We must never separate verse 1 from verse 2; the promise of verse 2 has the condition of trust in verse 1. "In the days when these people failed in faith, the surrounding mountains failed to secure safety to Zion. It was overcome and trodden down." (Morgan)

B. Righteousness among the people of God.

1. (3) Righteousness in the land.

**For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest
On the land allotted to the righteous,
Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity.**

a. **For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous:** This was the protection God promised to His people who trusted in Him. In Israel's history, that **scepter of wickedness**

only rested on the land when God's people were stubbornly unrighteous and untrusting in Him.

i. **Scepter of wickedness:** "This may or may not point to foreign domination: the heathen have no monopoly of sin." (Kidner)

ii. "Rod [**scepter**], here, may be taken for *persecution*, or for *rule*; and then it may be thus interpreted: 'The wicked shall not be permitted to *persecute always*, nor to have a *permanent rule*.'" (Clarke)

iii. "Regardless of how evil the times, they knew that the Lord had promised never to permit the wicked to prevail over the righteous." (VanGemeren)

iv. The pilgrims on their journey to Jerusalem would see much of **the land allotted to the righteous** as they traveled. They could rightly reflect on this promise and determine that they would be those who trusted in God. They were the **righteous** ones who had received God's allotment of the land.

b. **Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity:** God knows that the rule of the wicked could provoke even the godly to sin through rebellion or frustration. This is one of the reasons why God promised not to allow the wicked to rule **on the land allotted to the righteous**.

i. "It needs Divine wisdom to determine how long a trial must last in order that it may test faith, thereby strengthening it, and may not confound faith, thereby precipitating feeble souls into sin. He knows when to say, 'It is enough.'" (Maclaren)

ii. "If evil were to prevail, it might be an occasion for some of the godly to be tempted, to lose heart, and to

fall away. For the sake of God's people, wickedness must come to an absolute end!" (VanGemeran)

iii. "God (saith Chrysostom) does like a lute player, who will not let the strings of his lute be too slack, lest it mar the music, nor suffer them to be too hard stretched or screwed up, lest they break." (Trapp)

2. (4-5) *Righteousness in the heart.*

**Do good, O LORD, to *those who are good*,
And to *those who are upright in their hearts*.
As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways,
The LORD shall lead them away
With the workers of iniquity.
Peace *be upon Israel!***

a. **Do good, O LORD, to those who are good:** One of the primary features of the Old Covenant God made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai was the principle of blessing their obedience and cursing their disobedience. Here, the singer simply prayed that God would fulfill that aspect of the covenant and **do good** for those **who are good**.

i. The amazing greatness of the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that God did good for those who are not good. We remember that *in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:6)* and *God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8)*.

ii. **To those who are upright in their hearts:** "The 'good and upright in heart' are they who stand steady in every change of circumstances; who complain not of God's dispensations, but, believing everything to be best which he ordains, adhere to him with a will entirely conformed to his, in adversity no less than in prosperity." (Horne)

b. As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways:

Under the Old Covenant there was blessing for the good, but many curses for the wicked. The singer pictured these **workers of iniquity** being led out of the land in exile.

i. "...who are not *faithful*; who *give way to sin*; who *backslide*, and walk in a *crooked way*, widely different from the *straight way* of the *upright, yesharim*, the *straight* in heart; they shall be *led forth* to punishment *with the common workers of iniquity*." (Clarke)

ii. "The psalmist uses a vivid image to describe half-hearted adherents to the people of Jehovah: 'they bend their ways,' so as to make them crooked.... 'Those crooked, wandering ways'...can never lead to steadfastness or to any good." (Maclaren)

iii. **The LORD shall lead them away:** "It is important to notice the difference between the writer's *prediction* of God's sure judgment on the wicked and his *petition* for blessing on the righteous. He does not need to ask that the wicked will be judged, because their judgment is certain, sometimes sooner than either we or they expect!" (Boice)

c. Peace be upon Israel: Psalms 125 ends with a prayer pronouncing *shalom* upon Israel – essentially, that they would be the good that enjoy blessing and not be the wicked who suffer exile.

i. "We remember that Jerusalem means 'peace' (*shalom*). Thus, we are told, we shall not only be like Salem but shall have salem too." (Boice)

ii. "Finally the poet, stretching out his hands over all Israel, as if blessing them like a priest, embraces all

his hopes, petitions, and wishes in the one prayer
'Peace be upon Israel!'" (Maclaren)

Restore Our Fortunes, O Lord

Psa 126:1 When the LORD brought us back to Jerusalem, it was like a dream!

Psa 126:2 How we laughed, how we sang for joy! Then the other nations said about us, "The LORD did great things for them."

Psa 126:3 Indeed he did great things for us; how happy we were!

Psa 126:4 LORD, make us prosperous again, just as the rain brings water back to dry riverbeds.

Psa 126:5 Let those who wept as they planted their crops, gather the harvest with joy!

Psa 126:6 Those who wept as they went out carrying the seed will come back singing for joy, as they bring in the harvest.

Psalms 126:1-6

Psalms 126 – Amazed at God's Work

*This psalm is titled **A Song of Ascents**. It is the seventh in the series of 15 songs for pilgrims coming to Jerusalem. This song likely was composed after the exile, in wondrous gratitude for God's restoration, and in prayer for a furtherance of that work.*

A. Joy beyond expression at the return from exile.

1. (1) The fulfillment of the joyful dream.

**When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.**

a. **When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion:** The psalmist sang of a time when God set His people free from their captivity, and they were restored

to Jerusalem (**Zion**). Most associate this with the return from exile under Ezra and Nehemiah, but it is also possible that it describes David's return from his brief exile from Jerusalem in Absalom's coup (2 Samuel 15-19).

i. As one of the *Songs of Ascents*, we imagine these words in the mouths of pilgrims on the way to or having arrived at Jerusalem. Perhaps they considered their seasons away from Jerusalem as a symbolic **captivity**, and they celebrated the larger return from exile and their current, personal experience of such.

b. **We were like those who dream:** With power and beauty, the poet described the sense of happy, grateful astonishment at the power and goodness of God in bringing back His people from **the captivity of Zion**. It seemed too good, too great to be true, *but it was true*.

i. "We could not believe our own eyes and ears, but thought it to be but a dream or delusion of our own fancies; as is usual in matters of great joy, as Gen 45:26, Luk 24:11, Act 12:9." (Poole)

ii. "The people knew about the promises of restoration; but when the actual moment of restoration came, it was an overwhelming experience. They were like those 'who dreamed.' It all happened too quickly and seemed like a mirage." (VanGemeren)

iii. "It remained a vivid national memory (cf. the lively paraphrase in Today's English Version: 'it was like a dream! How we laughed, how we sang for joy...how happy we were'), as inspiring as the outbreaks of revival in the Christian church." (Kidner)

iv. At times Christian revival has been described in these terms. J. Edwin Orr's book *All Your Need* records the description of J. Oswald Sanders of the

1936 revival at Ngaruawahia, New Zealand: *"For some time before Easter, a spirit of unusual expectancy had been kindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, but the reality far exceeded the expectation. Those of us who were responsible for the conduct of the camp had the great joy of sitting back and seeing God work in a sovereign way. We were as men that dreamed."*

2. (2-3) *Laughing, singing, proclaiming.*

**Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for them."
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.**

a. **Then our mouth was filled with laughter:** They celebrated God's amazing work with **laughter** and **singing**. There was so much laughing that their **mouth was filled** with it.

i. "The mercy was so unexpected, so amazing, so singular that they could not do less than laugh; and they laughed much, so that their mouths were full of it, and that because their hearts were full too." (Spurgeon)

ii. "We must raise up ourselves with this consideration – that the gospel is nothing else but laughter and joy. This joy properly pertaineth to captives, that is, to those that feel the captivity of sin and death.... These are the disciples in whose hearts should be planted laughter and joy, and that by the authority of the Holy Ghost, which this verse setteth forth." (Luther, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **The LORD has done great things for them:** The sense of joyful amazement was not confined to the people of God. Onlooking **nations** had to proclaim that the work belonged to Yahweh, and that the work was truly **great**.

i. "The liberty now granted was brought about in so extraordinary a way, that the very *heathens* saw that the hand of the great Jehovah must have been in it." (Clarke)

ii. "These foreigners were no dreamers; though they were only lookers-on, and not partakers in the surprising mercy, they plainly saw what had been done, and rightly ascribed it to the great Giver of all good." (Spurgeon)

c. **The LORD has done great things for us:** The singer heard what the nations said, agreed with it, emphasized it with repetition, and personalized it. It became the declaration of what God had done **for us**.

i. "Their [reluctant] acknowledgment is caught up triumphantly by the singer. He, as it were, thanks the Gentiles for teaching him that word." (Maclaren)

ii. Boice suggested four occasions where many experience great joy and the sense that God has **done great things** in their Christian life:

- The joy of salvation.
- The joy of spiritual victory.
- The joy of Christian fellowship.
- The joy of a new work for God.

d. **And we are glad:** There is a joyful peace in the declaration. This is not a worked-up, hyped-up enthusiasm. This was the confident joy in what God had done, simply to declare **we are glad**.

i. "This is a mere burst of ecstatic joy. O how happy are we!" (Clarke)

ii. "There is a world of restrained feeling, all the more impressive for the simplicity of the expression, in that quiet 'We became glad.' When the heathen attested the reality of the deliverance, Israel became calmly conscious of it." (Maclaren)

B. The prayer and wise understanding.

1. (4) A prayer for continued deliverance.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD, As the streams in the South.

a. **Bring back our captivity, O LORD:** The second half of this psalm does not deny the amazed joy of the first half, but it recognizes that there is still work yet to be done. The returning exiles (under Ezra or David) realized there was much work yet to do, and the restoration had only yet begun.

i. "So the song is a cry for more complete restoration." (Morgan)

ii. We may imagine the sense of one whose life is profoundly changed by Jesus Christ. They are grateful and amazed at what He has done, yet can in the next moment consider how much more needs to be done.

iii. "For the psalmist, as for us, memory of the past could have become mere nostalgia. Those were the days! we say; wonderful, but gone forever. In Psalms 126, the memory of those singing, laughter-filled days of the past becomes, not nostalgia, but the ground of a strong hope for even better days to come." (Boice)

b. **As the streams in the South:** The **streams in the South** flowed when the rain fell in faraway mountains.

Those **streams** could appear suddenly and rush with a mighty flow, sometimes known as *flash floods*. The psalmist prayed for a mighty, sudden work of God to further the work of restoration among His people.

i. "To the south of favoured Judea stretched the dry and barren district, where in summer-time all the streams ceased to flow. That, to the singer, was the condition of the people. But in the autumn, the rains fill up the stony channels, a very river of life."
(Morgan)

ii. "[There are] few transformations more dramatic than that of a dry gully into a torrent. Such can be the effect of a downpour, which can also turn the surrounding desert into a place of grass and flowers overnight." (Kidner)

iii. "They desired that their return might be as rapid and as *abundant* as the waters of those rivers."
(Clarke)

iv. "However arid the land, He can send the revivifying streams." (Morgan)

2. (5-6) *The cycle of sadness and joy.*

Those who sow in tears

Shall reap in joy.

He who continually goes forth weeping,

Bearing seed for sowing,

Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,

Bringing his sheaves *with him* .

a. **Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy:** The gladness of the first half of this psalm was real, but only part of the picture. With wisdom the psalmist reminded himself and all of us that great joy is often preceded by a season of **tears**, as if they are seeds we **sow** that will bring a crop of **joy** to be later reaped.

i. "In the first image (the sudden filling of the desert streams, v. 4), the results are sudden and unearned. In the second image (the harvest after the difficult work of plowing and sowing seed, vv. 5-6) the results come only after a long period of hard work and waiting." (Boice)

ii. "The two images of renewal (4b, 5-6) are not only striking: they are complementary. The first of them is all suddenness, a sheer gift from heaven; the second is slow and arduous, with man allotted a crucial part to play in it." (Kidner)

iii. This illustration puts a connection between the tears and the joy. We want to reap the joy without ever having sown the tears.

iv. F.B. Meyer noted that some farmers soak (steep) their seeds before sowing them, and then applied the idea: "It is well when Christian workers steep their lessons and addresses with their prayers and tears. It is not enough to sow; we may do that lavishly and constantly, but we must add passion, emotion, tender pity, strong cryings and tears."

v. "He drops a seed and a tear, a seed and a tear, and so goes on his way. In his basket he has seed which is precious to him, for he has little of it, and it is his hope for the next year. Each grain leaves his hand with anxious prayer that it may not be lost: he thinks little of himself, but much of his seed, and he eagerly asks, 'Will it prosper? shall I receive a reward for my labour?' Yes...doubtless you will gather sheaves from your sowing." (Spurgeon)

b. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing: The idea is repeated and enlarged. Those who have endured much **weeping**, if they truly carry it as **seed for sowing** – holding and casting it with

faith in God and in His promise – those may be assured of reaping a good harvest.

i. “The people were not to sit by idly, waiting for God to come through. They had to go out and sow, praying that the Lord would be true. The phrase ‘seed to sow’ (v. 6) is reminiscent of Haggai’s encouragement to the people to sow whatever little they had left, because the Lord will bless them.” (VanGemeren)

ii. “Both the going forth and the coming home are stressed by a doubling of the verb, and might be translated, ‘He that surely goes forth weeping...will surely come home with shouts of joy.’” (Kidner)

c. **Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing:** Tears truly *sown* in faith will bring in time a true harvest of **rejoicing**, as if the reapers held heavy **sheaves** of grain. This is a powerful and great promise that our tears and sorrows need not be wasted, but can be sown for a joyful harvest received in a better season.

i. “Because the Lord has written *doubtless*, take heed that you do not doubt. No reason for doubt can remain after the Lord has spoken.” (Spurgeon)

ii. In the joy of the present pilgrim gathering, we sense the singers enjoying that harvest, yet wisely understanding that there will be future tears to sow in faith.

iii. “O disciple of Jesus, behold an emblem of thy present labour, and thy future reward. Thou ‘sowest,’ perhaps, ‘in tears;’ thou doest thy duty amidst persecution and affliction, sickness, pain, and sorrow; thou laborest in the church, and no account is made of thy labours; no profit seems to arise from them....

Yet the day is coming when thou shalt 'reap in joy;' and plentiful shall be thy harvest." (Horne)

iv. "He guards the buried seed, and stands sponsor for the harvest. No sigh, no tear, no prayer, inspired by the Spirit of God can positively be lost or unproductive. Like your Lord, you shall yet see of the travail of your soul, and be satisfied." (Meyer)

v. Alexander Maclaren wondered how much encouragement and strength "...have been drawn for centuries from the sweet words of this psalm. Who can tell how many hearts they have braced, how much patient toil they have inspired? The psalmist was sowing seed, the fruit of which he little dreamed of, when he wrote them, and his sheaves will be an exceeding weight indeed."

vi. "For thus thy blessed Master 'went forth weeping, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, bearing precious seed,' and sowing it around him, till at length his own body was buried, like a grain of wheat, in the furrow of the grave. But he arose, and is now in heaven; from whence he 'shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,' with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, 'bringing his sheaves with him.'" (Horne)

Unless the Lord Builds the House

Psa 127:1 If the LORD does not build the house, the work of the builders is useless; if the LORD does not protect the city, it does no good for the sentries to stand guard.

Psa 127:2 It is useless to work so hard for a living, getting up early and going to bed late. For the LORD provides for those he loves, while they are asleep.

Psa 127:3 Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a real blessing.

Psa 127:4 The sons a man has when he is young are like arrows in a soldier's hand.

Psa 127:5 Happy is the man who has many such arrows. He will never be defeated when he meets his enemies in the place of judgment.

Psalms 127:1-5

Psalms 127 – God's Work in Building Houses, Cities, and Families

*This psalm is titled **A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.** Most believe Solomon to be the author, yet it is possible that the psalm was composed by David for Solomon. Here, Solomon will be considered the author.*

"The strength of the Hebrew people in the past, and all that remains of it today, largely results from the keen sense which they ever cherished of the importance of the home and the family. The house, the city, labour, are all important to the conserving of the strength of the family." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. Blessing upon daily life.

1. (1) God's work of building and guarding.

**Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman stays awake in vain.**

a. **Unless the LORD builds the house:** Solomon understood that the work of man had its place, but it was of little ultimate use without the work and blessing of God. Without God's work and blessing, **they labor in vain who build it.**

i. "No house-building is successful which leaves God out of account. How have we seen men build only

houses, with care and at great cost, only to see them crumble to pieces because God was forgotten!" (Morgan)

ii. "A Latin motto says, *Nisi Dominus Frusta*. It comes from the first words of this psalm and means 'Without the Lord, Frustration.' It is the motto of the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, appearing on its crest, and is affixed to the city's official documents. It could be attached to the lives of many who are trying to live their lives without the Almighty." (Boice)

iii. It is *possible* that the **house** built here is actually a family. "It may also signify the raising of a family, especially because this section precedes a unit in which the family is emphasized as a reward from the Lord (vv. 3-5). In the Old Testament it is usual to speak of a family as a 'house' even as we speak of a prominent family as a 'dynasty'." (VanGemeren)

iv. "It is a fact that *ben*, a son, and *bath*, a daughter, and *beith*, a house, come from the same root *banah*, to build; because sons and daughters build up a household, or constitute a *family*, as much and as really as stones and timber constitute a *building*." (Clarke)

b. **Unless the LORD guards the city:** The watchman has his role and should stay **awake**, but God's work and blessing are needed to truly guard the city.

c. **Builds the house...guards the city:** It's especially meaningful that *Solomon* wrote this psalm, because he knew what it was like to both build a house and guard a city. Wise Solomon understood that though God welcomed and even commanded human effort and participation, His work and blessing were more important.

i. "These would be splendid words to cut into granite over the entrance to all our homes, and to emblazon in gold in all the meeting places of those in civic authority. But better still let them be written in the heart of those who make homes, and guard and govern cities." (Morgan)

ii. "Note that the Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from labouring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty, nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing: nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth his power." (Spurgeon)

iii. "They, above all men, ought to implore the divine grace and benediction, who are employed either in building or defending the spiritual house and city of God." (Horne)

2. (2) The vanity of reliance on the strength of man.

***It is vain for you to rise up early,
To sit up late,
To eat the bread of sorrows;
For so He gives His beloved sleep.***

a. **It is vain for you to rise up early:** We gather that Solomon did not speak against hard work, because several of his proverbs praise the hard worker who rises early (Pro 6:6-11). From the first verse of this psalm, we understand that Solomon intended the *trust* many put in their hard work and the anxiety that showed reliance on self, not God (**to eat the bread of sorrows**).

i. **For you:** "He directs his speech to the persons forementioned, *the builders or watchmen*, of both which sorts there are many that use the following course." (Poole)

ii. "But the psalmist decries this as an inferior way of life if the hard work is only for the purpose of providing daily food and clothing for oneself and the family. The higher way of life begins with trusting the Lord in one's work." (VanGemeren)

iii. "Long hours do not mean prosperous work. The evening meal may be put off till a late hour; and when the toil-worn man sits down to it, he may eat bread made bitter by labour. But all is in vain without God's blessing." (Maclaren)

iv. **Bread of sorrows:** "...living a life of misery and labours, fretting at their own disappointments, eaten up with envy at the advancement of others, afflicted overmuch with losses and wrongs. There is no end of all their labours." (Manton, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **For so He gives His beloved sleep:** Men who are affected by reliance on their own work experience the anxiety that comes with it. God's blessing is to give His loved ones **sleep**. They can be at peace knowing that God's hand is at work and His eye watches even as they sleep.

i. **His beloved:** "...an allusion to Solomon's other name, Jedidiah, God's darling." (Trapp)

ii. "There may be a cryptic reference to himself by Solomon in the words 'those he loves' (v. 2). In Hebrew the words are actually 'his beloved,' the name God gave Solomon according to 2 Samuel 12:25: Jedidiah, meaning 'Beloved of Jehovah.'" (Boice)

iii. **Sleep:** "Begone, dull, worrying care! Let me rest sweet Faith and Hope, close mine eyes and still my heart; Jesus, give me sleep, and in sleeping give me my heart's desire, that I may awake and be satisfied."
(Meyer)

B. Blessing upon the family.

"The labours of mankind, first in building houses and cities, and then in guarding and securing their possessions, are undergone, not with a view to themselves alone, but to their families, which they would establish and perpetuate."
(Horne)

1. (3) *The reward of children.*

**Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.**

a. **Children are a heritage from the LORD:** Solomon considered the wisdom of trusting God in building a house (verse 1), but he also understood that a home is built by more than bricks and wood. He called upon all to see (**behold**) that children are a blessing.

i. "The Jew would ask, why is the house being built if it is not for the family? And why are the watchmen protecting the city if not for the families that live in it? Then as now, the family was the basic unit and most important element of society." (Boice)

ii. "Let the fruitful family, however poor, lay this to heart; 'Children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward.' And he who gave them will feed them; for it is a fact, and the *maxim* formed on it has never failed, 'Wherever God sends mouths, he sends meat.'" (Clarke)

iii. "He gives children, not as a penalty nor as a burden, but as a favour. They are a token for good if men know how to receive them, and educate them.

They are 'doubtful blessings' only because we are doubtful persons." (Spurgeon)

b. **The fruit of the womb is a reward:** Sadly, though Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1Ki 11:3), we know of only one of his specific descendants. Perhaps Solomon knew very little of this **reward**.

i. "This last was a fit lesson for Solomon, who, by so many wives and concubines, left but one only son that we read of, and him not of the wisest." (Trapp)

ii. "Like much of Solomon's wisdom, the lessons of this psalm, relevant as they were to his situation, were mostly lost on him. His building, both literal and figurative, became reckless (1Ki 9:10 ff., 1Ki 9:19), his kingdom a ruin (1Ki 11:11 ff.) and his marriages a disastrous denial of God (1Ki 11:1 ff.)." (Kidner)

2. (4-5) *Children like arrows.*

**Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.**

a. **Like arrows in the hand of a warrior:** In many ways children are like **arrows in the hand of a warrior**.

- They must be carefully shaped and formed.
- They must be guided with skill and strength.
- They must be given care or they will not fly straight.
- They must be aimed and given direction; they will not find direction on their own.
- They are, in some respects, only launched once.

- They are an extension of the warrior's strength and accomplishment.

- They have potential for much good or evil.

- i. **Like arrows:** "This similitude importeth that children must have more in them than nature; for arrows are no arrows by growth, but by art; so they must be such children, the knottiness of whose nature is refined and reformed, and made smooth by grace; and then they are cared for." (Trapp)

- ii. "...ready winged with duty and love, to fly to the mark; polished and keen, to grace and maintain the cause of their parents." (Horne)

- iii. "We shall see them shot forth into life to our comfort and delight, if we take care from the very beginning that they are directed to the right point." (Spurgeon)

- iv. "If it is a vain act to build a house without God or watch over a city without depending on God to preserve it, then it is even greater folly to try to raise a family without God." (Boice)

- b. **Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them:** If children are a reward (verse 3), then there is great blessing and happiness in having many children.

- i. **Who has his quiver full of them:** "...who hath a numerous issue; which as it is a great blessing in itself, so Solomon's want of it made it more valuable in his eyes." (Poole)

- ii. "A quiver may be small and yet full; and then the blessing is obtained. In any case we may be sure that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of children that he possesseth." (Spurgeon)

iii. "I remember a great man coming into my house, at Waltham, and seeing all my children standing in the order of their age and stature, said, 'These are they that make rich men poor.' But he straight received this answer, 'Nay, my lord, these are they that make a poor man rich; for there is not one of these whom we would part with for all your wealth.'" (Hall, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. "Many children make many prayers, and many prayers bring much blessing." (German proverb, cited in Spurgeon)

c. But shall speak with their enemies in the gate:

The gate of an ancient city was a place of business and justice. This verse speaks of children of the godly having places of prominence and influence in their communities.

i. "As the arrows protect the warrior, so the godly man need not be afraid, when blessed with sons.... A house full of children, born before one becomes old...is a protection against loneliness and abandonment in society." (VanGemeren)

ii. "Nobody cares to meddle with a man who can gather a clan of brave sons about him." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The gate was the place where justice was administered, and where was the chief place of concourse. It is therefore improbable that actual warfare is meant; rather, in the disputes which might arise with neighbours, and in the intercourse of city life, which would breed enmities enough, the man with his sons about him could hold his own. And such blessing is God's gift." (Maclaren)

iv. "One can discover his ideal through his song. It is that of a prosperous city, its enemies kept outside its gates; and that of the secret of its prosperity as being

the house well-built, in the spiritual and moral sense, and the families dwelling within such houses as being able to deal with its enemies in the gate.” (Morgan)

Blessed Is Everyone Who Fears the Lord

Psa 128:1 Happy are those who obey the LORD, who live by his commands.

Psa 128:2 Your work will provide for your needs; you will be happy and prosperous.

Psa 128:3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in your home, and your children will be like young olive trees around your table.

Psa 128:4 A man who obeys the LORD will surely be blessed like this.

Psa 128:5 May the LORD bless you from Zion! May you see Jerusalem prosper all the days of your life!

Psa 128:6 May you live to see your grandchildren! Peace be with Israel!

Psalms 128:1-6

Psalms 128 – The Blessed Family of Those Who Fear the LORD

*This psalm is titled **A Song of Ascents**. It is another of the 15 songs sung by travelers on their way to Jerusalem, usually for one of the three yearly feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). Like Psalms 127, it has a focus on God's work in and through the family.*

"It is of real significance that these songs of home and of true civic consciousness are found among those which are sung on the way that leads to worship. It is ever good to carry into the place of our communion with God the interests of home and city. It is only by doing so that we can influence these for their lasting good." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. The blessing described.

1. (1) Blessing to all who fear the LORD.

**Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.**

a. **Blessed is every one who fears the LORD:** The proper honor and respect the creature owes to the Creator is described as *the beginning of wisdom* in many places (Psa 111:10, Job 28:28, Pro 1:7; Pro 9:10, and Ecclesiasts 12:13). It is to be expected that such wise living brings a blessing.

i. "Blessed above all the sons of men, and the author of blessing to them all, was the man Christ Jesus, because above them all, and for them all, he feared, he loved, and he obeyed." (Horne)

b. **Blessed is every one:** This blessing is available to all who will honor and respect God receive this. It isn't dependent on race, class, education, or even intelligence.

i. "Happiness belongeth not to the rich, the powerful, and the prosperous as such; but in every state and condition, blessed is the man that 'feareth Jehovah.'" (Horne)

c. **Who walks in His ways:** This explains what the psalmist meant by the fear of the LORD. It wasn't fundamentally a matter of having certain *feelings* toward God, but a matter of a life of obedience.

i. "The deepest and central truth concerning him is that he fears Jehovah. The reality of that fear is seen in that he walks in the ways of Jehovah. Such a man is indeed blessed, that is, happy, in the true sense of that word." (Morgan)

ii. "It is idle to talk of fearing the Lord if we act like those who have no care whether there be a God or no. God's ways will be our ways if we have a sincere reverence for him: if the heart is joined unto God, the feet will follow hard after him." (Spurgeon)

2. (2-3) *Blessings described.*

**When you eat the labor of your hands,
You *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well with you.
Your wife *shall be* like a fruitful vine
In the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants
All around your table.**

a. **When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy:** The psalmist had in mind the hard-working farmer who enjoys the food of his own work. Though an element of work is cursed since Adam's time (Gen 3:17-19), at least a portion of this curse is taken away for the one who fears the LORD.

i. "Thy labour shall not be vain and fruitless, and the fruit of thy labours shall not be taken away from thee, and possessed by others, as God threatened to the disobedient, Deuteronomy 28, but enjoyed by thyself with comfort and satisfaction." (Poole)

ii. "That is, thou shalt reap and receive the sweet of thy sweat, whether it be of the brow or of the brain, according to the kind of thy calling." (Trapp)

iii. "Thou shalt not be exempted from *labour*. Thou shalt *work*: But God will *bless* and *prosper* that work, and thou and thy family shall eat of it. Ye shall all live on the produce of your own labour, and the hand of violence shall not be permitted to deprive you of it." (Clarke)

b. **Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine:** The one who fears the Lord may be blessed with a large, happy home. The home is happy in its very **heart**, and the children flourish. As they gather (**all around your table**) there is a sense of community and happiness.

i. The *vine* was a symbol not only of fruitfulness (here explicitly so) but of sexual charm (Son 7:8 ff.) and of

festivity (Jdg 9:13).” (Kidner)

ii. Though the idea of bearing children is found in the figure of the **fruitful vine**, it goes far beyond it. “Good wives are also fruitful in kindness, thrift, helpfulness, and affection: if they bear no children, they are by no means barren if they yield us the wine of consolation and the clusters of comfort.” (Spurgeon)

iii. The psalmist took it for granted that God’s people were married. This was and is often assumed among the Jewish people: “At this day every Jew is bound to marry about eighteen years of age, or before twenty, else he is accounted as one that liveth in sin.” (Trapp, 1662)

iv. *Christianity* brought in the idea that singleness is also a calling of God, and that in some cases is to be preferred over being married. *Jesus was single*.

c. **Like a fruitful vine...like olive plants:** These were two important crops in ancient Israel. The grapes and wine from the **fruitful vine** and the oil from the **olive plants** were not necessities for survival, but they made life so much better. A happy marriage and flourishing children are not essential for survival, but greatly enrich life in their own way.

i. “The vine and the olive are two of the best fruits... both together implying that a great part of a man’s temporal happiness consisteth in having a good wife and children.” (Trapp)

ii. “What a charming cluster of images! The wife as a vine twining round the carved trellis work of the inner court of the [Middle Eastern] home – as though the woman gives the rich wine of life, which is love, as well as shadowing fertility and graceful beauty; whilst

children as olive plants are sources of perennial joy. Would you have such a home? Its key-stone is the fear of grieving the Spirit of God.” (Meyer)

iii. “Olive trees take a long time to mature and become profitable. Patiently cultivated, they become quite valuable and continue to produce a profitable crop for centuries, longer perhaps than any other fruit-producing tree or plant.” (Boice)

iv. “Though the olive tree may not bear after it has been planted for forty years, it is a symbol of longevity and productivity. So are children within the household of faith! They are not like grass, which is here today but is gone tomorrow. Rather, they are olive trees that in due time bear their fruit.” (VanGemeren)

v. “The interesting thing about these two images, vines and olive plants, is that they are biblical symbols of the abundant life. They are not food staples like wheat or corn. They symbolize rich blessing.” (Boice)

3. (4) The promise of blessing repeated.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD.

a. **Thus shall the man be blessed:** As stated before in verse 1, there is assurance of blessing for all who honor and respect God the way that they should. We recognize that some people have genuinely feared the LORD, yet have not enjoyed all of the specific blessings described in verses 2-3.

- This is because the psalmist wrote this as his *desired* blessing for those who fear the LORD.
- This is because these are general descriptions of the blessed life in ancient Israel, and not universal promises to the people of God.

- This is because these are not the only blessings of life, and God may give other blessings in compensation to those who fear the LORD.

- This is because none of us perfectly fears the LORD.

- i. "If temporal blessings be granted him, he accepteth them as shadows of those which are eternal; if they are denied, he remembereth that they are only shadows, and are therefore denied, that he may fix his thoughts and affections more firmly on the substance." (Horne)

- b. **Who fears the LORD:** This is a further condition upon these general promises. The honor and respect that the creature owes the Creator is essential.

B. The blessing pronounced.

1. (5) Blessing connected with Jerusalem.

**The LORD bless you out of Zion,
And may you see the good of Jerusalem
All the days of your life.**

- a. **The LORD bless you out of Zion:** As another of the Songs of Ascents, it is natural for the singers of this psalm to think about the connection of blessing with Jerusalem. God has good for His people that will come **out of Zion**.

- When we consider that much of the teaching and ministry Jesus did was in Jerusalem, we see that we are blessed **out of Zion**.

- When we consider that Jesus died as a sacrifice and a substitute for our sins in Jerusalem, we see that we are blessed **out of Zion**.

- When we consider that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven from Jerusalem, we see that we are blessed **out of Zion**.

- When we consider that the gospel was first preached out of Jerusalem and the church was birthed there, we see that we are blessed **out of Zion**.

b. **May you see the good of Jerusalem:** For the one who fears the LORD, it is a blessing *for* him to see **the good of Jerusalem**. It shows that there is a sense in which a happy home is not enough; we must also have care for our community and nation.

i. "Blended with the sweet domesticity of the psalm is glowing love for Zion. However blessed the home, it is not to weaken the sense of belonging to the nation." (Maclaren)

ii. "If piety can be too individualistic, and a family too self-contained, the final strophe takes care of both these dangers." (Kidner)

iii. Instead, strong and happy homes are for **the good** of a city. "The strength of any city lies in its strong family life. The true strength of the family issues from its ordering in the fear of the Lord." (Morgan)

2. (6) *Blessing connected with family.*

**Yes, may you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!**

a. **May you see your children's children:** The blessing to the one who fears the LORD goes beyond the holy city and impacts the holy family. The psalmist sees the blessing as enjoying grandchildren.

i. Since the pilgrim journeys to Israel were often made as families, it made sense for there to be much attention given to family relationships in the Songs of Ascents.

b. **Peace be upon Israel:** The psalm ends with this happy and confident declaration. The psalmist understood that if the people of Israel did fear the LORD, this blessing of

shalom would be evident in their community, in their family, and in the kingdom as a whole.

i. "This ancient singer had a true conception of the obligations flowing from personal and domestic blessings. He teaches us that it is not enough to 'see children's children,' unless we have eyes to look for the prosperity of Jerusalem, and tongues which pray not only for those in our homes, but for 'peace upon Israel.'" (Maclaren)

They Have Afflicted Me from My Youth

Psa 129:1 Israel, tell us how your enemies have persecuted you ever since you were young.

Psa 129:2 "Ever since I was young, my enemies have persecuted me cruelly, but they have not overcome me.

Psa 129:3 They cut deep wounds in my back and made it like a plowed field.

Psa 129:4 But the LORD, the righteous one, has freed me from slavery."

Psa 129:5 May everyone who hates Zion be defeated and driven back.

Psa 129:6 May they all be like grass growing on the housetops, which dries up before it can grow;

Psa 129:7 no one gathers it up or carries it away in bundles.

Psa 129:8 No one who passes by will say, "May the LORD bless you! We bless you in the name of the LORD."

Psalms 129:1-8

Psalms 129 – Afflicted Yet Confident in God's Deliverance

*This psalm is another of the series of fifteen titled **A Song of Ascents**. As the pilgrims came to Jerusalem to remember God's many past deliverances (such as in the Feasts of Passover or Tabernacles), they prayed confidently for God's continued protection and the defeat of their many enemies.*

"Whereas most nations tend to look back on what they have achieved, Israel reflects here on what she has survived. It could be a disheartening exercise, for Zion still has its ill-wishers. But the singers take courage from the past, facing God with gratitude and their enemies with defiance." (Derek Kidner)

A. God's goodness to afflicted Israel.

1. (1-3) Israel afflicted but not destroyed.

**"Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth,"
Let Israel now say—**

**"Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth;
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
The plowers plowed on my back;
They made their furrows long."**

a. **Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth:** The psalmist presented this as the testimony of Israel (**let Israel now say**). The covenant descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have endured unique and evil affliction throughout their history.

i. "'Many a time,' Israel says, because she could not say how many times. She speaks of her assailants as 'they,' because it would be impossible to write or even to know all their names." (Spurgeon)

ii. **"From my youth;** from the time that I was a people, when I was in Egypt and came out of it, which

is called the time of Israel's youth,
Jer 2:2, Eze 23:3." (Poole)

iii. The statement is repeated twice for emphasis, and rightfully so. The Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Syrians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Roman Catholics, the kings of Europe, the Muslims, the Czars, and the Nazis all have done their best to wipe out the Jews. Yet they remain.

iv. One might say that the chief accomplishment of the Jewish people has been *survival*. "The Jews are the longest-enduring distinct ethnic people on the planet. They have been slandered, hated, persecuted, expelled, pursued, and murdered throughout their long existence, but they have survived intact." (Boice)

v. "These repetitions are after the manner of poetry: thus she makes a sonnet out of her sorrows, music out of her miseries." (Spurgeon)

b. Yet they have not prevailed against me: This is the happy testimony of Israel. Jew-hatred has raged against them for centuries, yet the enemies of the Jewish people have never ultimately succeeded or **prevailed against** them.

i. "What a wonder it is that Satan and man do not prevail against the saint! There is no way of accounting for it, except in God's election. Because God has chosen us for Himself, and redeemed us at great cost, He cannot afford to hand us over to the will of our enemies." (Meyer)

ii. "There is a forceful Christian battle cry, composed in Latin and placed next to the burning bush: *Nec tamen consumebatur!* It means 'Yet not consumed.'

God's people may be oppressed, but they are never consumed." (Boice)

iii. "The right use of retrospect is to make it the ground of hope. They who have passed unscathed through such afflictions may well be sure that any tomorrow shall be as the yesterdays were, and that all future assaults will fail as all past ones have failed." (Maclaren)

iv. In a New Covenant context, we can be confident in Jesus' promise that the strategies of hell will never prevail against His church (Mat 16:18). "The Church is invincible.... the Church shall stand firm, because founded on a rock." (Trapp)

c. **The plowers plowed on my back:** The psalmist described the many afflictions of Israel as if their enemies ran over their stretched-out bodies with a plow. This is a vivid picture of suffering and subjugation, being utterly laid low before one's foes.

i. "The afflicted nation was, as it were, lashed by her adversaries so cruelly that each blow left a long red mark, or perhaps a bleeding wound, upon her back and shoulders, comparable to a furrow which tears up the ground from one end of the field to the other." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The word *horsu*, which signifies to dig, or cut the ground, and so, to plow, is also used simply for cutting, carving, or engraving; see Exo 35:33; Jer 17:1." (Horne)

iii. "While there is evidently a sense of danger in the mind of the singer, there is an utter absence of despair." (Morgan)

2. (4) *The God who delivers.*

**The LORD is righteous;
He has cut in pieces the cords of the wicked.**

a. **The LORD is righteous:** God promised to preserve His covenant people of Israel, and His faithfulness in delivering them is a demonstration of His righteousness. The fact that the **LORD is righteous** means He has and will keep His promises to Israel.

i. "The survival of this people, so hated but so resilient, bore silent witness to their Preserver (as, one may feel, it has continued to do)." (Kidner)

b. **He has cut in pieces the cords of the wicked:** Israel's foes were strong and clever, but not greater than God, who could deliver. The ways the **wicked** restrained and enslaved God's people would be **cut in pieces**.

i. "The 'cords' denote the yoke as a whole, which was fastened to the neck of an animal (v. 4; cf. Jer 30:8)." (VanGemeren)

B. Asking God to turn back those who hate Jerusalem.

1. (5-7) Shame for those who hate Zion.

**Let all those who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned back.
Let them be as the grass *on* the housetops,
Which withers before it grows up,
With which the reaper does not fill his hand,
Nor he who binds sheaves, his arms.**

a. **Let all those who hate Zion be put to shame:** The psalmist prayed that not only would the Israelites be delivered from their enemies, but that God would also apply His righteousness to their enemies. They should be shamed and **turned back**.

i. Some take offence at the prayer the psalmist made against the enemies of Israel, yet there is really no

basis for such offence. "It is striking in this case at least how mild these imprecations are. The psalmist is not asking that those who have harmed Israel be sent to hell, or even that they experience the same sufferings they have inflicted on others. He asks only that they and their designs might not prosper." (Boice)

ii. "At the heart of high and holy patriotism there must ever burn a divine anger with all that is opposed to the purpose and plan of God. To hate Zion is to hate God. To tolerate those who do so, is to be confederate with their wickedness." (Morgan)

iii. This is "...a proper wish, and contains within it no trace of personal ill-will. We desire their welfare as men, their downfall as traitors. Let their conspiracies be confounded, their policies be turned back. How can we wish prosperity to those who would destroy that which is dearest to our hearts?" (Spurgeon)

b. **Let them be as the grass:** Grass that grows in the rainy season (especially on the **housetops** of the ancient Middle East) quickly **withers** as the weather becomes warm and dry. He prayed that the present green season of Israel's enemies would be short-lived.

i. "The graphic image of the grass on flat rooftops of clay, which springs quickly because it has no depth of earth, and withers as it springs, vividly describes the short-lived success and rapid extinction of plots against Zion and of the plotters." (Maclaren)

ii. "Thus, while the felicity of Zion's children is rooted and grounded in Christ, that of her enemies hath no foundation at all." (Horne)

iii. "Grass on the rooftop is a nonentity in the world: the house is not impoverished when the last blade is

dried up, and, even so, the opposers of Christ pass away, and none lament them. One of the fathers said of the apostate emperor Julian, 'That little cloud will soon be gone'; and so it was. Every sceptical system of philosophy has much the same history; and the like may be said of each heresy." (Spurgeon)

c. **With which the reaper does not fill his hand:** The grass of the previous verse was useless for the **reaper** or those who gather grain (**he who binds sheaves**). The psalmist wanted the uselessness of the wicked enemies of Israel to be exposed and evident to all.

i. "While the church subsisteth from generation to generation, the kingdoms and empires that have persecuted her, fade and wither away of themselves." (Horne)

ii. "Study a chapter from the 'Book of Martyrs,' and see if you do not feel inclined to read an imprecatory Psalm over Bishop Bonner and Bloody Mary." (Spurgeon)

2. (8) *Denial of blessing for those who hate Zion.*

**Neither let those who pass by them say,
"The blessing of the LORD be upon you;
We bless you in the name of the LORD!"**

a. **Neither let those who pass by them say:** The psalmist prayed that these enemies of Israel would *not* enjoy **the blessing of the LORD** upon them. He prayed that the pleasant picture of happy harvest work found in Rth 2:4 would never be fulfilled for these enemies of Israel.

b. **We bless you in the name of the LORD:** The blessing of God is the greatest thing any human life can enjoy, giving goodness to every aspect of life. The

psalmist prayed that *none* of this goodness would be given to those who hated Jerusalem and Israel.

i. "In harvest times men bless each other in the name of the Lord; but there is nothing in the course and conduct of the ungodly man to suggest the giving or receiving of a benediction." (Spurgeon)

My Soul Waits for the Lord

Psa 130:1 From the depths of my despair I call to you, LORD.

Psa 130:2 Hear my cry, O Lord; listen to my call for help!

Psa 130:3 If you kept a record of our sins, who could escape being condemned?

Psa 130:4 But you forgive us, so that we should stand in awe of you.

Psa 130:5 I wait eagerly for the LORD's help, and in his word I trust.

Psa 130:6 I wait for the Lord more eagerly than sentries wait for the dawn—than sentries wait for the dawn.

Psa 130:7 Israel, trust in the LORD, because his love is constant and he is always willing to save.

Psa 130:8 He will save his people Israel from all their sins.

Psalms 130:1-8

Psalms 130 – Out of the Depths

*This psalm is another in the series titled **A Song of Ascents**. Psalms 130 begins with a personal testimony of God's rescue from the depths of guilt. From there, the author ascends step by step to a place where he can give confidence to others in their trust in God.*

Because Psalms 130 is marked by an awareness of sin and a powerful assurance of forgiveness, tradition numbers it

among the seven penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143).

"Luther, when he was buffeted by the devil at Coburg, and in great affliction, said to those about him, Come, let us sing that psalm, 'Out of the depths,' etc., in derision of the devil.... And surely this psalm is a treasury of great comfort to all in distress." (John Trapp)

"On the afternoon of that same day [which his heart was strangely warmed and he truly trusted in Jesus for salvation] John Wesley attended a vesper service at St. Paul's Cathedral, in the course of which Psalms 130 was sung as an anthem. Wesley was greatly moved by the anthem, and it became one of the means God used to open his heart to the gospel of salvation." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. Crying out to the God who helps and forgives.

1. (1-2) A cry from the depths.

**Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD;
Lord, hear my voice!**

Let Your ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications.

a. **Out of the depths I have cried to You:** Previously in the psalms there have been cries from the depths of the earth (Psa 71:20) or the depths of the grave (Psa 86:13). Once again, from a place of deep and overwhelming danger, the psalmist cries out to Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel.

i. People experience depths of poverty, sorrow, confusion, and pain. Yet the depth that the psalmist cried from here was the depth of the awareness and guilt of sin (verse 3). Many have been spiritually drowned in these depths.

ii. "Self-help is no answer to the depths of distress, however useful it may be in the shallows of self-pity." (Kidner)

iii. "In this Psalm we hear of the pearl of redemption, verses 7 and 8: perhaps the sweet singer would never have found that precious thing had he not been cast into the depths. 'Pearls lie deep.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **Lord, hear my voice:** Translators use the same word *Lord* to translate both the name *Yahweh* in the first line of this psalm, and *Adonai* in the second line. Each word is a title or name for the God of the Bible, the Creator of heaven and earth. Here, the psalmist called out to *Adonai*, His master and ruler, asking Him to **hear** his **voice**, knowing that for God to hear His people is to help His people.

i. "As Jehovah marks [God's] unchangeable faithfulness to his promises of delivering his people, so Adonai marks his Lordship over all hindrances in the way of his delivering them." (Fausset, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. "Twice he here nameth the Lord, as desirous to take hold of him with both his hands." (Trapp)

c. **Let Your ears be attentive:** The plea to God is emphasized using repetition as a poetic tool.

i. "It is better for our prayer to be heard than answered. If the Lord were to make an absolute promise to answer all our requests, it might be rather a curse than a blessing." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) *The great forgiveness of God.*

**If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But *there is* forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared.**

a. **If You, LORD, should mark iniquities:** In asking for God to help, the psalmist also understood that he had no confident reason to ask or to be heard by God *apart* from His great forgiveness. Without this graciousness, no one could **stand** before Yahweh Adonai (**You, LORD...O Lord**).

i. **Should mark iniquities:** "The word rendered above 'mark' is literally *keep* or *watch*, as in Psa 130:6, and here seems to mean *to take account of*, or retain in remembrance, in order to punish." (Maclaren)

ii. "Tis true, the Lord marks all iniquity to know it, but he doth not mark any iniquity in his children to condemn them for it: so the meaning of the Psalm is, that if the Lord should mark sin with a strict and severe eye, as a judge, to charge it upon the person sinning, no man could bear it." (Caryl, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "If thou shouldst set down every deviation in thought, word, and deed from thy holy law; and if thou shouldst call us into judgment for all our infidelities, both of heart and life; O Lord, who could stand? Who could stand such a trial, and who could stand acquitted in the judgment?" (Clarke)

iv. **Who could stand?** "*To stand* is a judicial phrase, and notes a man's being absolved or justified, upon an equal trial, as Psa 1:5, Rom 14:4, where it is opposed to falling." (Poole)

b. **But there is forgiveness with You:** Years of previous relationship with God had taught the psalmist that there is, in fact, **forgiveness** with God. When we are hit hard with our awareness of sin, it can be hard to believe, but it is true: **there is forgiveness with God**.

i. **There is forgiveness with You:** "You may not find forgiveness with other people. Your husband or your wife may not forgive you, if you have wronged him or her. Your children may not forgive you. Your coworkers may not forgive you. You may not even be able to forgive yourself. There is one who will, and that one is God. Write down where you can see and reflect on it often: Our God is a forgiving God." (Boice)

ii. **There is forgiveness with You:** "And when God once speaks forgiveness, it can never be unspoken. Fear and doubt and misgiving may question, but cannot revoke it." (Meyer)

iii. "The word rendered 'forgiveness'.... literally means cutting off, and so suggests the merciful surgery by which the cancerous tumour is taken out of the soul." (Maclaren)

iv. "When Luther was in great trouble of soul, he was comforted by one who said to him, 'Dost thou not believe thy Creed?' 'Yes,' replied Luther, 'I believe the Creed.' 'Well, then,' rejoined the other, 'one article in it is, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."' Luther's heart was lightened at once by the remembrance of the words in this psalm, 'there is forgiveness.' It may be that you have sinned many times and grievously; but 'there is forgiveness.' Though a child of God, you have gone far astray from him; but 'there is forgiveness.' You have backslidden sadly and horribly; but 'there is forgiveness.' The devil comes and howls at you, and tells you that your doom is sealed, and your damnation is sure; but 'there is forgiveness.' Oh, blessed sentence!" (Spurgeon)

c. **That You may be feared:** One of the great purposes of God's great forgiveness is to build a sense of gratitude

and reverence in those He forgives. His pardon should lead to purity and His forgiveness to an appropriate fear of displeasing the One who has been so gracious.

i. "Those who have been forgiven are softened and humbled and overwhelmed by God's mercy, and they determine never [again] to sin against such a great and fearful goodness. They do sin, but in their deepest hearts they do not want to, and when they do they hurry back to God for deliverance." (Boice)

ii. "It was a Welshman in the midst of the wonderful revival of 1905 who rendered verse Psa 130:4, 'There is forgiveness with Thee – enough to frighten us!' which if not accurate translation is fine exposition." (Morgan)

iii. "God's lovingkindness is so great and so wonderful, that the apprehension of it fills the soul with such a sense of His love that it is frightened. Frightened, that is, not at God, but at sin." (Morgan)

iv. "He is feared, not only because of his great judgment and harshness, but also because of his great love in forgiving. The godly respond with godly fear and love." (VanGemeren)

v. "The hammer of the law may break the icy heart of man with terrors and horrors, and yet it may remain ice still, unchanged; but when the fire of love kindly thaweth its ice, it is changed and dissolved into water – it is no longer ice, but of another nature." (Swinnock, cited in Spurgeon)

B. Wise speaking to self and Savior.

1. (5-6) Speaking to the soul.

**I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
And in His word I do hope.
My soul *waits* for the Lord**

**More than those who watch for the morning—
Yes, more *than* those who watch for the morning.**

a. **I wait for the LORD, my soul waits:** Having made his cry from the depths to God (verses 1-2), the singer then determined to **wait** upon God and the rescue He would bring.

b. **In His word I do hope:** The waiting was not passive or inactive. The psalmist used the time to actively set his **hope** upon God's promises, revealed in His **word**.

c. **My soul waits for the Lord:** Here, using the word *Adonai*, the psalmist again expressed his trust in *Yahweh Adonai* (**the LORD...the Lord**). This phrasing used both *Yahweh*, the name for the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and *Adonai*, the normal name for a master or lord.

d. **More than those who watch for the morning:** The poet used a vivid image to express his patient anticipation in waiting on God. We see a watchman in the darkness of the early morning, scanning the horizon for the first sign of the dawn. The watchman doesn't doubt that morning *will* come, but only wonders *when*, and watches for it diligently. So it was for the singer who watched for God and the help God promised to bring.

i. Some think **those who watch** were military guards, others think they were priests waiting for dawn so the morning sacrifices could be started for the day. It doesn't really matter if the watchmen were military or priestly; they waited for the morning with certain expectation that it would come.

ii. "With equal earnestness have the faithful since looked out for the dawning of that last morning, which is to abolish sin, and put an end to sorrow."
(Horne)

2. (7-8) *Speaking to the people of God.*

**O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is mercy,
And with Him *is* abundant redemption.
And He shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.**

a. **O Israel, hope in the LORD:** With this verse the phrasing turns from the personal to the public. What the psalmist learned in waiting upon God and trusting Him from the depths is now put to use as he calls upon Israel to put their

hope in Yahweh Adonai.

i. **Hope in the LORD:** The psalmist put his faith and hope in the Lord Himself, not in the mercy or redemption God would bring. He looked to the Giver before the gift.

ii. "Cease looking for the water, and look for the well. You will more readily see the Savior than see salvation, for he is lifted up, even he who is God, and beside him there is none else. You will more easily fix your eye on Jesus than upon justification, sanctification, or any other separate blessing." (Spurgeon)

b. **For with the LORD there is mercy:** What he learned in his personal life, he can put to application for the whole nation. When God's people humbly look to Him, there is **mercy** and **abundant redemption** for both the individual and the community.

i. **Abundant redemption:** "Are our sins great? with God there is mercy, matchless mercy. Are our sins many? with God is plenteous redemption, *multa redemptio*; he will multiply pardons as we multiply sins, Isa 55:7." (Trapp)

c. He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities:

This is the confident conclusion to the psalm, demonstrating trust that God *will* indeed bring the redemption and rescue to both the individual and the nation overwhelmed in the depths of their sin. What God has demonstrated in the private life, He will also perform for the community that cries out to Him.

i. "Nothing could be further from the shut-in gloom and uncertainty of 'the depths' than this. The singer is now liberated from himself to turn to his people and to hold out hopes that are far from tentative."
(Kidner)

I Have Calmed and Quieted My Soul

Psa 131:1 LORD, I have given up my pride and turned away from my arrogance. I am not concerned with great matters or with subjects too difficult for me.

Psa 131:2 Instead, I am content and at peace. As a child lies quietly in its mother's arms, so my heart is quiet within me.

Psa 131:3 Israel, trust in the LORD now and forever!

Psalms 131:1-3

Psalms 131 – David's Humble, Learned Contentment in the LORD

*This psalm is titled **A Song of Ascents. Of David.** Commentators suggest two possible occasions for its composition. The first may be when Saul hunted David, and David was repeatedly accused of ambition for the throne of Israel. The second may be David's in response to his wife, Michal, when she accused him of being vulgar and undignified after he danced in the procession of bringing the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2Sa 6:16-23).*

Whatever the occasion was, this short psalm is a beautiful denial of pride, arrogance, and selfish ambition. "It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn. It speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ." (Charles Spurgeon)

A. David declares his humble heart.

1. (1a) David renounces pride and arrogance.

**LORD, my heart is not haughty,
Nor my eyes lofty.**

a. **LORD, my heart is not haughty:** David learned to reject *pride*. David came before the Lord in conscious humility. He understood the principle explained in Proverbs and quoted twice in the New Testament: *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (Pro 3:34, Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5).

i. "The psalm begins with an emphatic reference to Yahweh... 'O Yahweh, my heart.' In the presence of the covenant God, the psalmist has experienced how wonderful complete submission to God is." (VanGemeren)

b. **Nor my eyes lofty:** David learned to reject *arrogance*. Under the influence of pride, we become arrogant and look down on other people. Though David had accomplished great things and had a great destiny in front of him, he didn't go around thinking of himself as better than others.

i. "Arrogance is an expression of pride. It is the proud who are arrogant, but arrogance goes beyond pride in that it is pride looking down on other people." (Boice)

2. (1b) David renounces selfish ambition.

**Neither do I concern myself with great matters,
Nor with things too profound for me.**

a. Neither do I concern myself with great matters:

David learned to reject *selfish ambition*, and he chose not to pursue **things too profound** for him. He did not set his focus on promotion or position above what God had appointed in the present season. Jesus taught us to accept a lower place (Luk 14:8-11) and wait patiently for God to lift us up in His wisdom and timing.

i. There are godly aspirations (Php 3:12-14) and then there are selfish ambitions (2Co 12:20, Gal 5:20, Php 1:16; Php 2:3). One way to distinguish between them is to look for a focus on God (related to spiritual aspirations) or a focus on self (selfish ambition).

ii. "Frequently, too, we exercise ourselves in great matters by having a high ambition to do something very wonderful in the church. This is why so very little is done. The great destroyer of good works is the ambition to do great works." (Spurgeon)

iii. "It is...difficult to recognize unruly ambition as a sin because it has a kind of superficial relationship to the virtue of aspiration – an impatience with mediocrity, and a dissatisfaction with all things created until we are at home with the Creator, the hopeful striving for the best God has for us." (Peterson, cited in Boice)

iv. "The young man who is quite content to begin with preaching in a little room in a village to a dozen is the man who will win souls. The other brother, who does not [consider] preaching till he can preach to five thousand, never will do anything, he never can." (Spurgeon)

v. "Fill your sphere, brother, and be content with it. If God shall move you to another, be glad to be moved; if he move you to a smaller, be as willing to go to a

less prominent place as to one that is more so. Have no will about it.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Great matters...things too profound:** These can also apply to some intellectual or mental pursuits that may become expressions of pride. In pride, we can *demand* to know aspects of God’s will or mind. This was Job’s sin, of which he repented (Job 40:1-5; Job 42:1-6).

i. David understood the principle of Deu 29:29 : *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

B. David declares his contented heart.

1. (2) *Contentment like a weaned child.*

**Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul,
Like a weaned child with his mother;
Like a weaned child *is* my soul within me.**

a. **Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul:** Instead of proud pursuits, David determined to find satisfaction and serenity of **soul**, content with God and His works. Those who feel constantly driven to do and achieve more in their relationship with God should learn some of what David here learned.

i. David phrased this with an emphasis on what *he* did. Of course it was ultimately the work of God within him, but it was vitally connected to his own will and choices. God didn’t do this *for* him; God used the operation of David’s choice. We must choose to calm and quiet our soul.

ii. “Oh the wonder of quiet contentment with God! He has enjoyed the walk with God in which he ‘stilled’ (‘composed’) himself and ‘quieted’ (i.e., ‘silenced’ or

'found rest,' Psa 62:1; Psa 62:5) his soul (v. 2)."
(VanGemeren)

b. **Like a weaned child with his mother:** A child not-yet weaned embraces his mother with the thought of food and immediate satisfaction. A **weaned child** embraces his mother out of a desire for love, closeness, and companionship. Such was David's humble desire to draw near to God.

i. God is beyond what we normally think of as gender; He is neither male nor female. Yet overwhelmingly, God is represented to us as a *Father*. This is one of the few passages where God is represented in some way as a mother. Others include Isa 49:15 and Isa 66:13.

ii. "Weaning was one of the first real troubles that we met with after we came into this world, and it was at the time a very terrible one to our little hearts. We got over it somehow or other." (Spurgeon)

c. **Like a weaned child is my soul:** The phrase is repeated for emphasis. The process of weaning may seem strange and terrible to the child, but it is necessary for the child's development. The **weaned child** comes to realize that the denial of one of the mother's gifts does not mean denial of the mother's presence. He comes to love the mother herself instead of the gift received from her.

i. We regard the process of weaning as natural, but the child likely regards it as a battle. What David wrote of here was contentment with God that did not come *naturally*, but through victory over what comes naturally and the habits associated with previous experience.

ii. "The weaned child with its mother is the child who has learned to be independent of that which seemed indispensable, and indeed was so at one time." (Morgan)

iii. "He is no longer angry with his mother, but buries his head in that very bosom after which he pined so grievously: he is weaned *on* his mother rather than *from* her." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Weaned from what? Self-sufficiency, self-will, self-seeking. From creatures and the things of the world – not, indeed, as to their use, but as to any dependence upon them for his happiness and portion." (Jay, cited in Spurgeon)

v. When God allows things or circumstances in our life that wean us from things we have relied on, we should never despise it. "Blessed are those afflictions which subdue our affections, which wean us from self-sufficiency, which educate us into Christian manliness, which teach us to love God not merely when he comforts us, but even when he tries us." (Spurgeon)

2. (3) Exhorting Israel to find the same contentment.

O Israel, hope in the LORD

From this time forth and forever.

a. **O Israel, hope in the LORD:** God's people could only learn and live the lesson David sang of in this short psalm if they set their **hope in the LORD**, and in nothing else. Nothing or no one else gives the same assurance.

i. "See how lovingly a man who is weaned from self thinks of others! David thinks of his people, and loses himself in his care for Israel." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The secret of victory over feverish ambition is divulged in the psalmist's appeal to Israel to hope in

the Lord.” (Morgan)

iii. There is the testimony of David’s experience that he wanted the people of God in general to enjoy. “Act all as I have done; trust in him who is the God of justice and compassion; and, after you have suffered awhile, he will make bare his arm and deliver you.” (Clarke)

iv. “The last verse rouses us from contemplating David to following his example and that of his greater Son: not through introspection but through being weaned from insubstantial ambitions to the only solid fare that can be ours. ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work’ (Joh 4:34).” (Kidner)

v. “Let his faithful people hope and trust, not in themselves, their wisdom, or their power, but in Jehovah alone, who will not fail to exalt them.” (Horne)

b. **From this time forth and forever:** The decision to place one’s **hope in the LORD** must have a beginning point, and that point should be *now* (**from this time**). From there, it should go **forth and forever**, never ending.

i. **Forever:** “Weaning takes the child out of a temporary condition into a state in which he will continue for the rest of his life: to rise above the world is to enter upon a heavenly existence which can never end.” (Spurgeon)

ii. It will endure forever, but it does have a beginning. “If there is any unconverted person here who cannot understand all this, I pray the Lord to make him a child first, and then make him a weaned child.” (Spurgeon)

The Lord Has Chosen Zion

Psa 132:1 LORD, do not forget David and all the hardships he endured.

Psa 132:2 Remember, LORD, what he promised, the vow he made to you, the Mighty God of Jacob:

Psa 132:3 "I will not go home or go to bed;

Psa 132:4 I will not rest or sleep,

Psa 132:5 until I provide a place for the LORD, a home for the Mighty God of Jacob."

Psa 132:6 In Bethlehem we heard about the Covenant Box, and we found it in the fields of Jearim.

Psa 132:7 We said, "Let us go to the LORD's house; let us worship before his throne."

Psa 132:8 Come to the Temple, LORD, with the Covenant Box, the symbol of your power, and stay here forever.

Psa 132:9 May your priests do always what is right; may your people shout for joy!

Psa 132:10 You made a promise to your servant David; do not reject your chosen king, LORD.

Psa 132:11 You made a solemn promise to David—a promise you will not take back: "I will make one of your sons king, and he will rule after you.

Psa 132:12 If your sons are true to my covenant and to the commands I give them, their sons, also, will succeed you for all time as kings."

Psa 132:13 The LORD has chosen Zion; he wants to make it his home:

Psa 132:14 "This is where I will live forever; this is where I want to rule.

Psa 132:15 I will richly provide Zion with all she needs; I will satisfy her poor with food.

Psa 132:16 I will bless her priests in all they do, and her people will sing and shout for joy.

Psa 132:17 Here I will make one of David's descendants a great king; here I will preserve the rule of my chosen king.

Psa 132:18 I will cover his enemies with shame, but his kingdom will prosper and flourish."

Psalms 132:1-18

Psalms 132 – Remembering the Promise to David and Beyond

*This psalm is another in the series of fifteen titled **A Song of Ascents**. It has no author associated with it in the title. Some believe David was the author, and some believe it was written after the exile. James Montgomery Boice made the case for Solomon as the author: "Since verses 8-10 are quoted in 2 Chronicles 6:41-42 as part of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, the psalm probably dates from Solomon's reign even though the title does not identify it as Solomon's psalm."*

The coming of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem is referred to in verses 6-9 of this psalm. Psalms 24 and Psalms 68 also refer to this event, which is described more fully in 1 Chronicles 15-16.

Psalms 132 is alluded to twice in the New Testament: Stephen alludes to Psa 132:5 in Act 7:46, and Peter alludes to Psa 132:11 in Act 2:30.

A. A heart for the house of the LORD.

1. (1-5) David's heart for the house of God.

LORD, remember David

And all his afflictions;

How he swore to the LORD,

And vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:

"Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house,

Or go up to the comfort of my bed;

I will not give sleep to my eyes

**Or slumber to my eyelids,
Until I find a place for the LORD,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”**

a. **LORD, remember David and all his afflictions:**

The singer began by remembering David, the great king of Israel – and all the **afflictions** he endured.

i. Apart from the Messiah (who is given the title *Son of David*), David the son of Jesse is acknowledged as Israel’s greatest king. Yet he had to endure a remarkable number of **afflictions**. All the following were true of David:

- He was despised and criticized by his family.
- He was placed in many life-and-death struggles.
- He was accused of treason and treachery.
- He was attacked by the connected, powerful, and ruthless.
- He lived many years as a fugitive, a wanted man.
- He had family, home, friends, and career taken from him.
- He experienced a significant season of backsliding.
- He accepted as the king only reluctantly.
- He faced many enemies in battle through many wars.
- He openly criticized and despised by his wife.
- He suffered because of his own sin and scandal.
- He endured great conflict and problems among his own children.
- He suffered a coup staged by his son, followed by a civil war.

- He was openly despised and criticized by some of his subjects.

- ii. The psalmist asked God to look upon and **remember** both David himself and **all his afflictions**. He prayed, "Lord, consider the man and consider his troubles. Let none of them be forgotten or wasted."

- iii. The **afflictions** of David always suggest the afflictions of his Greater Son: "That God would 'remember' the far greater 'afflictions' sustained for our sake by the Messiah in the days of his humiliation, when through much tribulation, he accomplished our redemption, and entered into his glory, is the petition preferred, in these words, by us Christians." (Horne)

- iv. The individual Christian can take comfort that God does **remember** all the **afflictions** endured unto His glory. "Thus God still bends over the scenes of the life-work of His children. The chapel where a McCheyne pleaded with his congregation; the South Sea Island, where a Williams poured out his blood; the dark forests in which a Brainerd wrestled for his Indians; the great Continent, where a Moffat, a Livingstone, a Hannington wrought, prayed, and suffered. He remembers David and all his afflictions." (Meyer)

b. **How he swore to the LORD:** The poet asked Yahweh to remember a specific oath David made unto Him. The oath itself is not recorded in 2 Samuel 7, but the heart behind it was recorded there.

- i. "Wearied with a stormy life, he might well have left it to others to care for the work.... He will put his own comfort second, God's service first." (Maclaren)

c. **Until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob:** David was absolutely dedicated to building God a temple, a **dwelling place**. David's dedication to this was so complete that he vowed to refuse himself many comforts of life until the job was finished.

i. After David built himself a fine palace, he felt guilty that a mere tent represented God's dwelling place. David asked Nathan the prophet for permission to build the temple, and Nathan originally said yes. Soon afterward, God told Nathan that David was not to build Him a temple, but his son would (2 Samuel 7).

ii. David did not *build* that **place for the LORD**, but he did **find** it. "We find by 1Ch 16:43, that he did not bless, and consequently did not inhabit his own house, until he had brought the ark to Zion, where the temple was afterwards erected." (Horne)

iii. God excused David from his obligation to build a temple. Yet God was so pleased with David's heart that He promised to build *David* a house, a lasting dynasty over Israel (2 Samuel 7).

iv. "And we find that he would have acted in all things according to his oath and vow, had God permitted him. But even after the Lord told him that Solomon, not he, should build the house he still continued to show his good will by collecting treasure and materials for the building, all the rest of his life." (Clarke)

v. David's passion speaks to us in at least two ways:

- We should have a passionate drive to enjoy God's presence in our own lives, that our hearts would truly be His home.
- We should have a passionate drive for the blessing and benefit of the house of God, the community of

His people.

vi. "I wish that this same zeal would take firm hold of all Christians. How many there are who dwell in their ceiled houses while the house of God lies waste! They can provide abundantly for themselves; but for God's cause, for God's gospel, for a place wherein the poor may meet for the preaching of the Word, they do not seem to care." (Spurgeon)

vii. **The Mighty One of Jacob:** "The designation 'Mighty One of Jacob' derives from Gen 49:24 and signifies the marvelous manner in which the Lord had protected, guided, and blessed Jacob. The epithet connotes the great strength of the Lord as the Divine Warrior." (VanGemenen)

2. (6-9) Our heart for the house of God.

**Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;
We found it in the fields of the woods.
Let us go into His tabernacle;
Let us worship at His footstool.
Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your saints shout for joy.**

a. **Behold, we heard of it:** Most all commentators understand **it** here to mean the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle associated with it. This would be the remembrance of the season before David brought the ark (and, presumably the tabernacle) into Jerusalem. The ark was lost, and under David's direction it was found.

i. "The location of the ark seems to have been forgotten during the reign of Saul when it was at Keriath-jearim (1 Chronicles 13:3), and it was only

found there later (in David's day) after a time of serious searching." (Boice)

b. **Let us go into His tabernacle:** As one of the Songs of Ascents, this song was sung by pilgrim travelers going to the temple in Jerusalem, mainly at feast times. They remembered and understood David's great heart for God's house and used it to inspire them as they said, **"Let us go into His tabernacle; let us worship at His footstool."**

c. **Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place:** The pilgrims on their journey remembered the words of Moses in the wilderness, who called out when the ark traveled, *Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You* (Num 10:35).

i. Though the **ark of God's strength** had found its resting place, this was still an appropriate saying for a pilgrim people.

d. **Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness:** When they sang of the goodness and glory of God's temple, they also remembered the position of His **priests**. It was fitting for them to be known for **righteousness** in life, and this would make God's **saints shout for joy**.

i. "The pure vestments of the priests were symbols of stainless character, befitting the ministers of a holy God. The psalmist prays that the symbol may truly represent the inner reality." (Maclaren)

ii. When God's servants are not **clothed with righteousness**, it can cause God's people to lose some of their **joy**. "[There is] no surer sign of God's gracious presence with a people, than a powerful ministry, clothed with inward purity and holiness, represented by the holy garments." (Trapp)

B. The promise of God's blessing.

1. (10) A prayer for blessing on the Messiah.

**For Your servant David's sake,
Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed.**

a. **For Your servant David's sake:** God promised that He would not forsake the sons of David (2Sa 7:14-16). When the psalmist prayed this, he prayed for the fulfillment of a promise God had already made.

i. "For his sake all those who are anointed in him are accepted. God blessed Solomon and succeeding kings, for David's sake; and he will bless us for Jesus' sake." (Spurgeon)

b. **Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed:** The singer asked that the favor of God would never be taken from His **Anointed**. There is a sense in which every king of David's line was God's anointed, but this looks to the ultimate **Anointed** one – the Messiah Himself, Jesus Christ. This is ultimately a prayer for blessing on God's Messiah, the **Anointed** Son of David.

i. "The prayer upholds David by the special designations 'your servant' (*ebed*; cf. 27:9) and 'your anointed one' (*masiah*; cf. 2:2; 84:9; 89:20). These designations apply to David and to all his descendants who were anointed as kings over Israel or Judah." (VanGemeren)

2. (11-12) God's promise to David.

**The LORD has sworn *in* truth to David;
He will not turn from it:**

"I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.

If your sons will keep My covenant

And My testimony which I shall teach them,

**Their sons also shall sit upon your throne
forevermore."**

a. **The LORD has sworn in truth to David:** Earlier (verse 2) the singer remembered how David made a solemn oath to God. In return, God made a solemn oath to David, as recorded in

2Sa 7:5-16. God would never **turn from** such an oath.

i. There was definitely a connection between the two oaths. "Jehovah's promise to establish a dynasty in Zion was made to the man who undertook to provide a Tabernacle for God in the midst of the City." (Morgan)

ii. "Though the narrative in Samuel pertaining to the promises to David (2Sa 7:12-16) makes no mention of an oath, here it is a poetic expression for the certainty of God's promise to David (cf. 89:3,35)." (VanGemeren)

b. **I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body:** The psalmist remembered the promises God made to David in 2Sa 7:12-16. These were the promises God confirmed with an oath.

i. **Forevermore:** "This was conditional with respect to the posterity of David. They have been driven from the throne, because they did not keep the Lord's covenant, but the true David is on the throne." (Clarke)

3. (13-15) *God's promise to Zion.*

**For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired *it* for His dwelling place:
"This *is* My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her poor with bread.**

a. **For the LORD has chosen Zion:** The connection is made between the choice of David and his descendants

and God's choice of Jerusalem (**Zion**) as His sacred **dwelling place**, the place He **desired**.

i. The Bible is based on historical facts – real people, real events, and real places. God could have chosen any place on earth to be the stage on which His drama of redemption was displayed, and He deliberately chose Zion. His dwelling is in no way *restricted* to Jerusalem and the land of Israel, but it is significant that this was the place He **desired**.

ii. **The LORD has chosen Zion:** "The human response was all too often cynical, treating God's choice as something to be exploited: a shelter against his judgment (Jeremiah 7, especially verses 8-15) or an asset to be commercialized (Mat 21:12 f.)." (Kidner)

b. **This is My resting place forever:** Once the ark of the covenant came into Jerusalem, there was to be no more traveling for the tabernacle. The tabernacle, the temple, the altar, and the ark would never rest in another place than Jerusalem.

i. "This is the joy of our souls, for surely we shall rest in God, and certainly our desire is to dwell in him. This also is the end of our fears for the church of God; for if the Lord dwell in her, she shall not be moved; if the Lord desire her, the devil cannot destroy her." (Spurgeon)

ii. There is a sense in which this section of the psalm takes the previous requests and answers them beyond all expectation. "The people had asked God to come to his resting place as the ark was brought to Jerusalem; God says that he will sit enthroned there 'for ever and ever.' They asked righteousness for the priests; God promises to clothe the priests with salvation, which is a greater concept. The people

asked that the saints might sing for joy; God promises that they will sing for joy forever." (Boice)

iii. "The Divine promises teach the great truth that God over-answers our desires, and puts to shame the poverty of our petitions by the wealth of His gifts. He is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.'" (Maclaren)

c. **I will abundantly bless her provision:** God promised to have a special material blessing on Jerusalem and Israel, especially as part of the blessings for obedience connected to the Mosaic Covenant (Deu 7:13; Deu 28:8-12).

i. "I will plentifully provide for Jerusalem, and all that live in her or resort to her for worship; nor shall they seek my face in vain." (Poole)

ii. **I will satisfy her poor with bread:** "Dainties I will not promise them; a sufficiency, but not a superfluity; poor they may be, but not destitute." (Trapp)

ii. Bishop George Horne, writing in the 1700s, had an interesting observation on this promise: "What a dreadful reverse of all this do we behold in the present state of the once glorious, but now desolated, Jerusalem!"

4. (16-18) *God's promise to His servants.*

**I will also clothe her priests with salvation,
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
There I will make the horn of David grow;
I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.
His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon Himself His crown shall flourish."**

a. **I will also clothe her priests with salvation:**
Earlier in verse 9 the singer prayed that the priests

would be clothed with righteousness. Now he declared a promise from God that He would also clothe the **priests with salvation**.

i. When those who serve as God's representatives are clothed **with salvation**, the people of God **shall shout aloud for joy**.

b. **There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed**: Jerusalem would be the place where the strength promised to David and his descendants would **grow**. God prepared a light (**a lamp**) for His Messiah, the ultimate **Anointed** One.

i. "The three terms, *horn*, *lamp* and *crown*, scarcely need comment, with their evident implications of strength, clarity and royal dignity. But note that the word used for *crown* (the same as for the high priest's mitre) draws attention to the fact that it symbolized the king's hallowing. Not power alone, but holiness is this king's – our King's – glory." (Kidner)

ii. **The horn of David grow**: "...a metaphor taken from those goodly creatures, as stags, and such like; whose chiefest beauty and strength consisteth in their horns, especially when they bud and branch abroad." (Playfere, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. "**A lamp**; a successor or succession to continue for ever in his family, as this phrase is expounded, 1Ki 11:36; 1Ki 15:4; and particularly one eminent and glorious light, to wit, the Messias, who shall come out of his loins, and revive and vastly enlarge his kingdom." (Poole)

iv. "That this verse doth mystically refer to Christ, the Jews confess.... So saith Rabbi Saadiah, 'The lamp is the king, which illuminates the nations:' and Kimchi, 'The horn of David, is the Messias.'" (Horne)

c. **His enemies I will clothe with shame:** Any and all who oppose God's Messiah will end in **shame**, but the Anointed One's **crown shall flourish**. His reign will prosper and last forever.

i. "Their shame they will be unable to hide, it shall cover them: God will array them in it for ever, and it shall be their convict dress to all eternity."
(Spurgeon)

When Brothers Dwell in Unity

Psa 133:1 How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God's people to live together in harmony!

Psa 133:2 It is like the precious anointing oil running down from Aaron's head and beard, down to the collar of his robes.

Psa 133:3 It is like the dew on Mount Hermon, falling on the hills of Zion. That is where the LORD has promised his blessing—life that never ends.

Psalms 133:1-3

Psalms 133 – The Blessed Unity of God's People

*Of the fifteen psalms in the series, Psalms 133 is the last of the four attributed to King David in the title: **A Song of Ascents. Of David.** We don't know exactly when David composed this song, but one likely occasion was when David was finally received as king over all the tribes of Israel, ending a terrible season of national division and discord.*

"It could date from the crowning of David at Hebron when the leaders of the nation were, for a time at least, of one heart and mind (see 2 Samuel 5:1; 1 Chronicles 12:38-40)." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. The blessing declared.

1. (1) *Unity among God's people is **good** and **pleasant**.*

**Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity!**

a. **Behold:** Psalms 133 begins with an exhortation to **behold** – that is, to take notice. What follows is important and deserves our attention.

i. “It is a wonder seldom seen, therefore behold it! It may be seen, for it is the characteristic of real saints – therefore fail not to inspect it! It is well worthy of admiration; pause and gaze upon it! It will charm you into imitation, therefore note it well!” (Spurgeon)

b. **How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity:** David draws our attention to something **good** and **pleasant** – unity among the people of God.

- It is **good** because it reflects God’s heart and purpose of unity among His people (also described in Joh 17:20-23, Eph 1:9-10).

- It is **pleasant** because it makes life together as God’s people so much more enjoyable than seasons when constant bickering and conflict dominate.

c. **How good and how pleasant:** Not everything that is good is pleasant, and not everything that is pleasant is good. Unity among God’s people is such a remarkable blessing because it is both **good** and **pleasant** – and both to a high degree, indicated by the repetition of **how**.

i. “Precious and profitable, sweet and delectable...dainty and goodly, as Rev 18:14. Communion of saints is the next happiness upon earth to communion with God.” (Trapp)

d. **For brethren to dwell together:** David had in mind the relationship that God’s people have with one another, not with the world around them. Believers

should work to have good and peaceable relationships with all others (Rom 12:18), but here the focus is on relationships among God's people.

e. **For brethren to dwell together in unity:** This **unity** is tested, because these brethren **dwell together**. In many ways it is easier to have some kind of unity with those distant. To **dwell together** means the bonds of unity and peace will be at times tested.

i. This song was especially relevant for pilgrims travelling together to Jerusalem. "During the pilgrimages, the Jews enjoyed an ecumenical experience on their way toward and in Jerusalem. The pilgrims came from many different walks of life, regions, and tribes, as they gathered for one purpose: the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem." (VanGemeren)

B. The blessing described.

1. (2) *Like oil on the head.*

***It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Running down on the beard,
The beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his garments.***

a. **It is like the precious oil upon the head:** In the ancient Middle East, it was common to anoint one's head with oil, sometimes as a greeting entering a home (Luk 7:46). This was done to refresh the one receiving the oil, and to give a good smell from the fragrance that came from the perfumed oils. Among God's people, unity refreshes and makes a pleasant atmosphere for all.

i. "The anointing oil intended for the head (Exo 29:7) was not confined to it, nor could its fragrance be contained. Exo 29:21 provided explicitly that after the pouring of the oil on the head, some was to be

sprinkled on the robes: 'and he and his garments shall be holy'." (Kidner)

b. Running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron:

The picture in words shows that unity is a *rich and abundant* blessing – as this oil overflowed the head and came down the beard. It also shows that unity is a *rare and precious* blessing, because the suggestion is that this was holy anointing oil, which was not to be imitated (Exo 30:22-33).

i. Christian unity is "...far beyond that common friendship so highly extolled by Cicero, and other heathens; and is therefore here fitly compared to that nonesuch [perfect] odoriferous ointment." (Trapp)

ii. This is a unity of holiness. "That anointing oil, poured upon Aaron, was the oil of consecration, and symbolized his separation from all evil; it was the oil of holiness." (Morgan)

iii. "The odour of this must have been very agreeable, and serves here as a metaphor to point out the exquisite excellence of brotherly love." (Clarke)

iv. "What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high-priest alone!" (Spurgeon)

c. The beard of Aaron: The oil upon the priest's head was good as an instrument of refreshing and greeting, as it would be for anyone else. Yet for Aaron (as high priest), it also was part of his consecration to priestly service (Exo 29:7), which led to so many other good things.

- Service unto God and His people.
- Atonement of sins.

- Offerings of peace, fellowship, and thanksgiving.
- Compassionate ministry to the people of God.
 - i. The illustration is wonderful. When there is unity among God's people, it is not only good and pleasant in itself, but it also leads to so many other good things. When the people of God struggle with each other, there are so many other good things they are not doing and enjoying.
 - ii. God intended the priests to represent His righteousness and salvation to a watching world. Spiritually speaking, this anointing made that possible. Unity among God's people has a similar effect.
- d. **Running down on the edge of his garments:** What an abundant blessing unity is! It is like oil poured out so richly that it flows from the head to the beard, and then down to the very edge of the priest's **garments**.
 - i. There is some debate whether the **edge of his garments** refers to the collar (as Maclaren and others say) or to the bottom hem of his priestly robes. Either way, it was an impressive flow of oil.
 - ii. Boice commented on the New International Version translation of verse 2 (*...running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe*): "In verse 2 the threefold repetition 'running down,' 'running down,' and 'down' – the Hebrew uses the same verb each time – emphasizes that the blessing of Aaron's anointing was from above himself, that is, from God." (Boice)
 - iii. "In short, true unity, like all good gifts, is from above; bestowed rather than contrived, a blessing far more than an achievement." (Kidner)

2. (3) *Like the dew of the mountains.*

***It is like the dew of Hermon,
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing—
Life forevermore.***

a. **It is like the dew of Hermon:** King David used a second word picture to show how wonderful unity is among the people of God. It is also like the rich **dew** that covers Mount **Hermon**, making it green and moist. It is a distinct contrast to the dry wilderness found in other parts of Israel. Unity among God's people makes life thriving and healthy.

i. "On this mountain the dew is very copious. Mr. Maundrell says that 'with this dew, even in dry weather, their tents were as wet as if it had rained the whole night.'" (Clarke)

ii. "The dew was ever the agent of renewal, of refreshment, of fertilizing force: that out of which life was maintained in strength." (Morgan)

iii. "It refreshes the thirsty ground and quickens vegetation; so fraternal concord, falling gently on men's spirits, and linking distant ones together by a mysterious chain of transmitted good, will help to revive failing strength and refresh parched places." (Maclaren)

iv. "To the Jew it seemed as though the Hermon range overtowered the land and was able to drop its dews across the intervening distance upon the mountains of Zion. Thus, from the glory of His exaltation Jesus drops the dew of the Holy Spirit as blessing upon the lowlands of our life – that blessing which is life forevermore." (Meyer)

b. **Descending upon the mountains of Zion:** This blessing comes upon Jerusalem, which David established

as the center for Israel's worship. In Jerusalem their unity would be displayed and enjoyed.

i. "This dew is not to be taken literally [in Jerusalem], for the falling of the dew availed very little to the refreshment or improvement of the hills of Zion and Moriah, especially as now they were filled with buildings; but allegorically, for the favour or blessing of God, which is frequently called and compared to the dew, as Pro 19:12, Isa 18:4, Hos 14:5, Mic 5:7." (Poole)

c. **The LORD commanded the blessing—life forevermore:** The blessing of unity is something God *commands*, something the previously cited New Testament passages teach (Joh 17:20-23, Eph 1:9-10, Rom 12:18). Since we will have **life forevermore** with the people of God, we should work hard to enjoy unity with them now.

i. "O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity." (Spurgeon)

ii. "O, come the day when division shall cease, and enmity be done away; when the tribes of the spiritual Israel shall be united in a bond of eternal charity, under the true David, in the Jerusalem which is above; and saints and angels shall sing this lovely Psalm together!" (Horne)

Come, Bless the Lord

Psa 134:1 Come, praise the LORD, all his servants, all who serve in his Temple at night.

Psa 134:2 Raise your hands in prayer in the Temple, and praise the LORD!

Psa 134:3 May the LORD, who made heaven and earth, bless you from Zion!

Psalms 134:1-3

Psalms 134 – The LORD Bless You from Zion

*This is the last of the series of fifteen psalms with the title **A Song of Ascents**. It is a call to the priests and Levites of the temple to continue their service of praise, with the answer of a blessing back to the people.*

Charles Spurgeon suggested that the scene was of pilgrims departing Jerusalem in the darkness of early morning, calling out to the priests and Levites who stood watch at the temple. The pilgrims then receive the blessing spoken back to them.

A. The blessing pronounced unto the LORD.

1. (1) A call for servants to bless the LORD.

**Behold, bless the LORD,
All you servants of the LORD,
Who by night stand in the house of the LORD!**

a. **Behold, bless the LORD:** As in several other places in the Book of Psalms, this does not mean to **bless** in the sense that a greater bestows a blessing on a lesser. God is infinitely greater than man, and man could never give a blessing to God. The idea is that it blesses and honors God when His creatures praise Him and thank Him appropriately.

i. **Behold:** "I believe *hinneh* should be taken here in the sense of *take heed!* Be upon your guard." (Clarke)

ii. **Bless the LORD:** “That is, speak good of his name: tell the wonders he has wrought, and show that his name is exalted.” (Clarke)

iii. “Be not content with praise, such as all his works render to him; but, as his saints, see that ye ‘bless’ him. He blesses you; therefore, be zealous to bless him.” (Spurgeon)

iv. “Do not stand there like statues, silent and idle, but employ your hearts and tongues in singing forth the praises of the Lord.” (Poole)

b. **All you servants of the LORD:** The **servants** of God have special reason to bless and praise Him. If the **servants of the LORD** do not praise Him, who will?

- They partner with God in His work, which is a special privilege.
- They enjoy the nearness that comes with working together with God.
- They receive special strength and anointing as they serve Him.
- They have new and exciting challenges of faith.

i. Since this is addressed to **servants of the LORD**, this psalm shows us that *praise* should be added to all our work. We can imagine a temple guard asking, “Isn’t it enough that I do my work and stand watch through the night?” The answer is: “No, that isn’t enough. To all your work, add praise – **bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD.**”

ii. “Not one of you should serve him as of compulsion, but all should bless him while you serve him; yea, bless him for permitting you to serve him, fitting you to serve him, and accepting your service.” (Spurgeon)

iii. "Those who have made their way to Jerusalem to worship and have completed their devotions are now returning home, singing this song. They will not be able to worship in the temple again until their next journey. As they leave the city, they are encouraged to know that the priests will be remaining behind to represent them at the temple and so they will be worshipping God there continually." (Boice)

iv. G. Campbell Morgan also understood these priests and Levites, these **servants of the LORD**, to be representative of the whole community of God's people. He applied the same principle to Christian worship in a modern age. A small gathered group, in some way, represents the large and mighty body of Christ.

c. Who by night stand in the house of the LORD:

The singer probably had in mind the priests or Levites who had special duties at the temple, including **night** watches at **the house of the LORD**.

i. "We read, 1Ch 9:33, that the Levitical singers were 'employed in their work day and night;' to the end, doubtless, that the earthly sanctuary might bear some resemblance of that above, where, St. John tells us, the redeemed 'are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in the temple.' Rev 7:15." (Horne)

ii. **Stand in the house of the LORD:** "The priestly and Levitical ministry is often designated by the verb 'stand' (cf. Psa 135:2; Deu 10:8)." (VanGemeren)

iii. "...not only by day, but also and especially by night, when their watch was more necessary. See Exo 27:21, Lev 8:35, 1Sa 3:3. As you watch by night when others sleep, so do you utter the praises of God when others are silent." (Poole)

iv. "Even when they were placed in a dungeon, bleeding from their beatings, Paul and Silas sang praise to God at night (Act 16:25).\" (Boice)

v. **By night:** \"It is comparatively easy to bless the Lord in the daytime, when sunshine lies like His smile on nature, and all the world is full of music, and our lives flow on quietly and peacefully. It does not take much grace to bless the Lord then. But when night has draped the earth and hushed the homes of men to solitude, and we stand amid the shadows that lurk around us in the sanctuary, facing the inexplicable mysteries of Providence, of history, of life and death; then the song falters on our lips, and chokes our utterance.\" (Meyer)

2. (2) *Blessing God with uplifted hands.*

Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary, And bless the LORD.

a. **Lift up your hands:** The lifting of **hands** was not only the common posture for prayer among the ancient Hebrews; it was also appropriate for praise. It displayed the anticipation of gratefully receiving from God, and the sense of surrender to Him.

i. \"The lifting up of the hands was a gesture in prayer, it was an intimation of their expectation of receiving blessings from the Lord, and it was also an acknowledgment of their having received the same.\" (Pierce, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Lift up your hands in the sanctuary:** It may be that **sanctuary** is used more generally here, referring to the temple area as a whole. Yet, only the priests or Levites had access to the **sanctuary** (temple building) itself.

- i. "So it may speak of worshipping 'in holiness'...and be the passage underlying 1Ti 2:8, 'lifting up holy hands'." (Kidner)
- ii. "One readeth it, out of the Hebrew, Lift up your hands, sanctuary, that is, ye sanctuary men." (Trapp)
- c. **And bless the LORD:** The idea is repeated for emphasis. God's people should give Him their thanks, honor, praise, and glory.
 - i. "They are exhorted to fill the night with prayer as well as watchfulness, and to let their hearts go up in blessing to Jehovah. The voice of praise should echo through the silent night and float over the sleeping city." (Maclaren)

B. The blessing received from the LORD.

1. (3) The Creator's blessing.

The LORD who made heaven and earth Bless you from Zion!

- a. **The LORD who made heaven and earth:** The psalmist looked to God as Creator of all things, and appealed to the God of all might, design, and wisdom with the prayer that follows.
 - i. Most commentators see this as a reference to the priestly blessing described in Num 6:23-27.
 - ii. "The blessing extends to all of life, wherever the people of God may go or live, because Yahweh, the covenant God ("Lord"), is "the Maker of heaven and earth," i.e., the Great King of the universe (see 121:2)." (VanGemeren)
 - iii. "Is it possible for Him to have made heaven and earth, and not to be able to bless the soul whom He has not created only, but redeemed! He cannot fail to bless those that bless." (Meyer)

b. **Bless you from Zion:** The idea is that blessing from the God of all creation flows **from Zion** unto each of His people wherever he or she may be. This is a beautiful and fitting close to the Songs of Ascents. The people came to Zion in pilgrimage to bless the LORD, singing the songs of Psalms 120-134. The Songs of Ascents end with the idea that God's blessing went with each of them **from Zion**. The blessing doesn't remain in Jerusalem, but flows from there.

i. **Bless you** uses the *singular*, not the plural. This is because the idea is drawn from Num 6:23-27, and also because God's blessing comes to us not only as a community, but also as individuals. He loves and blesses us *each one*.

ii. "Zion cannot bless us; the holiest ministers can only wish us a blessing; but Jehovah can and will bless each one of his waiting people." (Spurgeon)

iii. This spiritual conception of God was different than the pagan ideas. The psalmist understood that God's power and influence weren't limited to Jerusalem. The God who had the Creator's claim to all **heaven and earth** was no local deity; He could bless in Zion and **from Zion**.

iv. "So the thought is that if we bless God in our worship, as we must, then God will also bless us abundantly in our daily lives. This is the only ultimate goal of any Christian: to bless God and to be blessed by him." (Boice)

Your Name, O Lord, Endures Forever

Psa 135:1 Praise the LORD! Praise his name, you servants of the LORD,

Psa 135:2 who stand in the LORD's house, in the Temple of our God.

Psa 135:3 Praise the LORD, because he is good; sing praises to his name, because he is kind.

Psa 135:4 He chose Jacob for himself, the people of Israel for his own.

Psa 135:5 I know that our LORD is great, greater than all the gods.

Psa 135:6 He does whatever he wishes in heaven and on earth, in the seas and in the depths below.

Psa 135:7 He brings storm clouds from the ends of the earth; he makes lightning for the storms, and he brings out the wind from his storeroom.

Psa 135:8 In Egypt he killed all the first-born of people and animals alike.

Psa 135:9 There he performed miracles and wonders to punish the king and all his officials.

Psa 135:10 He destroyed many nations and killed powerful kings:

Psa 135:11 Sihon, king of the Amorites, Og, king of Bashan, and all the kings in Canaan.

Psa 135:12 He gave their lands to his people; he gave them to Israel.

Psa 135:13 LORD, you will always be proclaimed as God; all generations will remember you.

Psa 135:14 The LORD will defend his people; he will take pity on his servants.

Psa 135:15 The gods of the nations are made of silver and gold; they are formed by human hands.

Psa 135:16 They have mouths, but cannot speak, and eyes, but cannot see.

Psa 135:17 They have ears, but cannot hear; they are not even able to breathe.

Psa 135:18 May all who made them and who trust in them become like the idols they have made!

Psa 135:19 Praise the LORD, people of Israel; praise him, you priests of God!

Psa 135:20 Praise the LORD, you Levites; praise him, all you that worship him!

Psa 135:21 Praise the LORD in Zion, in Jerusalem, his home. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 135:1-21

Psalms 135 – Praise for the Creator and the Redeemer

Psalms 135 is of note for its use of other passages from the Hebrew Scriptures. Almost every verse quotes the words or the idea of another Old Testament passage, including four different psalms, two passages from Deuteronomy, two from Jeremiah, and two from Exodus. Derek Kidner wrote of Psalms 135, "Every verse of this psalm either echoes, quotes or is quoted by some other part of Scripture."

"The reader will be struck by the many allusions as well as direct citations to other passages of Scripture. The end result of the psalmist's artistry is that the inspired creation stands on its own, even though it is dependent on other Scriptures for its poetic, liturgical, and idiomatic expressions." (Willem VanGemeren)

A. The good God, Creator and Redeemer.

1. (1-2) A call to praise Yahweh.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the name of the LORD;

Praise *Him*, O you servants of the LORD!

You who stand in the house of the LORD,

In the courts of the house of our God,

a. **Praise the LORD:** Psalms 135 begins and ends with this phrase. It is a call for stirring, passionate praise to God, but not one that runs only on the fuel of emotion.

This psalm gives many reasonable, logical reasons why we should **praise the LORD**.

i. Meyer described the characteristics of praise: "In this, we adore God for all that He is in Himself. Forgetting our own petty interests and concerns, our *me* and *my* and *mine*, we take our stand with angels and archangels and all the host of heaven in crying, Thou art worthy, O holy, holy, holy Lord! Heaven and earth are full of Thy great glory. Glory be unto Thee, O God Most High!"

ii. "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God." (Former Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple, cited in Boice)

b. **Praise the name of the LORD**: To praise **the name of the LORD** is to honor Him in all His character and attributes. The name was understood to represent the nature of the person.

c. **Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD**: As in the previous psalm (Psa 134:1), this refers to the priests and Levites who would **stand in the house of the LORD** for priestly and temple duties.

d. **In the courts of the house of our God**: This may speak of the people of Israel in general, who as worshippers had no access to the **house of the LORD** (only priests could enter the holy place). The common man could stand **in the courts of the house of our God**. This was a call to *all* God's people to praise Him.

i. "...**in the courts**, where the people also had a place, 2Ch 4:9, and are required to bear a part in this heavenly Hallelujah." (Trapp)

ii. "While the previous psalm greeted chiefly the Levites on night watch, this one has a great and varied throng in view, priestly and lay." (Kidner)

iii. "'Our God' signifies possession, communion in possession, assurance of possession, delight in possession. Oh the unutterable joy of calling God our own!" (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) Reasons to praise the LORD.

**Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
Sing praises to His name, for *it is* pleasant.
For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,
Israel for His special treasure.**

a. **For the LORD is good:** In listing reasons *why* Yahweh should be praised, the psalmist began with the simple declaration of God's goodness. This idea is presented many times in the Bible (as in Psa 73:1; Psa 143:10; Mar 10:18).

i. "Do not only magnify the Lord because he is God; but study his character and his doings, and thus render intelligent, appreciative praise." (Spurgeon)

ii. "It is impossible to keep the reasons for praise out of the summons to praise." (Maclaren)

iii. We, as human beings, have ideas of **good** and evil because we are made in the image of God. Anyone who questions the goodness of God or His existence has to answer the question, "Where do we get our concept of good?"

iv. "What could be more basic than this, that God is good? Nothing at all, since this is God's essential nature." (Boice)

b. **Sing praises to His name:** One of the ways praise is shown is in song. God's people should be a singing

people.

c. **For it is pleasant:** This is the second reason given to praise Yahweh – because it benefits the one who praises Him. This should never be the *primary* reason, because then worship has a focus on self-gratification. Yet worship does do us good, and there is nothing wrong with enjoying the fact that it is **pleasant**.

i. True praise is **pleasant**, "...an angelical exercise, and, to the spiritually minded man, very delicious. To others, indeed, who have no true notion of God but as of an enemy, it is but as music at funerals, or as the trumpet before a judge, no comfort to the mourning wife, or guilty prisoner." (Trapp)

d. **For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself:** The psalmist listed a third reason to praise God – His choosing of **Israel for His special treasure**. He did not choose Israel because they were great, but because He is great in love.

i. God told Israel this in Deu 7:7-8 : *The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers.*

ii. "God's choice exalts; for here the name is changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the prince. The love of God gives a new name and imparts a new value; for the comparison to a royal treasure is a most honourable one." (Spurgeon)

iii. Israel was called to praise God because He chose them; this is also a reason for the New Covenant believer. "Shall not we Christians, then, praise the same gracious Lord, who hath chosen us out of the

world, who hath given unto us his gospel, who dwelleth in us by his Spirit, and who, by that Spirit, maketh us more than conquerors over our spiritual adversaries?" (Horne)

iv. **For Himself:** "It does not say, 'unto heaven,' – 'unto certain privileges,' – 'unto certain favors.' All that is quite true, but it does not say so here: 'The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself.' Oh, what a blessed choice is this – to be chosen unto God!" (Spurgeon)

e. **His special treasure:** This fulfills the declaration of God in Deu 7:6 : *For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.*

i. **His special treasure:** "The Hebrew word *segullah* signifieth God's special jewels, God's proper ones, or God's secret ones, that he keeps in store for himself, and for his own special service and use. Princes lock up with their own hands in secret their most precious and costly jewels; and so doth God his." (Brooks, cited in Spurgeon)

3. (5-7) *Praising God who creates all things.*

**For I know that the LORD is great,
And our Lord *is* above all gods.
Whatever the LORD pleases He does,
In heaven and in earth,
In the seas and in all deep places.
He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the
earth;
He makes lightning for the rain;
He brings the wind out of His treasures.**

a. **I know that the LORD is great, and our Lord is above all gods:** In declaring the greatness of God, the singer used two great titles or names for God. Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel (the **LORD**) **is great**, and Adonai, the Master of all (**Lord**) **is above all gods**. God is exalted above all the pretended deities of the pagans.

i. **I know that the LORD is great:** "On what a firm foundation does the psalmist plant his *foot* – *'I know!'* One loves to hear men of God speaking in this calm, undoubting, and assured confidence, whether it be of the Lord's goodness or of the Lord's greatness." (Bouchier, cited in Spurgeon)

ii. **All gods:** "...or worshipped as gods by the heathen people. And therefore seeing they commonly praise and extol their idols, it becometh you not to be silent as to the praises of your God." (Poole)

b. **Whatever the LORD pleases He does:** The psalmist exalted Yahweh as having ultimate power, with the ability to do whatever He desires. His power extends everywhere, **in heaven and in earth**, and **in the seas** and **from the ends of the earth**.

i. **In the seas and in all deep places:** "...in the visible seas, and in those invisible depths, both of earth, and of the waters which are contained in the bowels of the earth." (Poole)

c. **He makes lightning for the rain:** This exalts Yahweh over the Canaanite idol Baal, who was thought of as the god of weather. Baal was sometimes depicted as holding a bolt of lightning, and was believed to be the one who sent **the rain**. The singer rebuked this, and sang of Yahweh as the Lord over **lightning, rain**, and **the wind**.

i. "The heathen divided the great domain; but Jupiter does not rule in heaven, nor Neptune on the sea, nor Pluto in the lower regions; Jehovah rules over all." (Spurgeon)

ii. "The Psalmist teacheth us to restore the celestial artillery to its rightful owner, Jehovah, the God of Israel, and the Creator of the universe." (Horne)

4. (8-12) Praising God who redeems His people.

**He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt,
Both of man and beast.
He sent signs and wonders into the midst of you, O
Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.
He defeated many nations
And slew mighty kings—
Sihon king of the Amorites,
Og king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan—
And gave their land as a heritage,
A heritage to Israel His people.**

a. **He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt:** Yahweh also exalted Himself over the supposed gods of the Egyptians. This psalm refers back to the many plagues God inflicted on Egypt (**He sent signs and wonders into the midst of you**), with the greatest of them being the judgment of death on **the firstborn of Egypt**.

i. "Egypt was the theatre of the grand contest between the God of Israel and the gods of the heathen." (Horne)

ii. **Upon Pharaoh and all his servants:** "God's servants are far better off than Pharaoh's servants: those who stand in the courts of Jehovah are delivered, but the courtiers of Pharaoh are smitten all

of them, for they were all partakers in his evil deeds.”
(Spurgeon)

b. **He defeated many nations:** Once Israel was free from Egypt, Yahweh also showed His greatness over all supposed gods by defeating **nations** and **mighty kings** that attacked His people.

i. “Psalms are never weary of drawing confidence and courage for today from the deeds of the Exodus and the Conquest.” (Maclaren)

ii. “The victories over *Sihon* and *Og* are recounted in Num 21:21 ff., Num 21:33 ff.; cf. Deu 3:11.”
(Kidner)

iii. “These two kings were the first to oppose, and they were among the most notable of the adversaries: their being smitten is therefore a special object of song for loyal Israelites.” (Spurgeon)

c. **And gave their land as a heritage:** God demonstrated His greatness over all the gods of the Canaanites by defeating **the kingdoms of Canaan** and giving their land to Israel, as a **heritage** to them – something passed on from generation to generation.

i. “Canaan was their heritage because they were the Lord’s heritage, and he gave it to them actually because he had long before given it to them by promise.” (Spurgeon)

B. Exalting God in all His greatness.

1. (13-14) *The greatness of God’s fame.*

**Your name, O LORD, endures forever,
Your fame, O LORD, throughout all generations.
For the LORD will judge His people,
And He will have compassion on His servants.**

a. **Your name, O LORD, endures forever:** In light of Yahweh's incomparable greatness (just declared in the previous verses), the singer praised His unchanging **name** and His never-ending **fame**.

i. "God does not change. He is immutable, to use the proper theological word for his unchangeability. God is not only good; but he will also always be good. He is always the same in his eternal attributes. We will never find him to be less good than he has been to us in the past." (Boice)

ii. **Your fame:** "The name was to increase in significance, as the Lord increased his activities in the history of redemption and revealed more of himself in history and revelation." (VanGemeren)

b. **For the LORD will judge His people:** The good and great God **will** bring justice, righteousness, and **compassion** to His people. His goodness and greatness are *for* them, not against them.

i. "He will do them justice against their enemies." (Clarke)

2. (15-18) *The greatness of God in contrast to the empty folly of idols.*

**The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;
They have ears, but they do not hear;
Nor is there *any* breath in their mouths.
Those who make them are like them;
So is everyone who trusts in them.**

a. **The idols of the nations are silver and gold:** This is a striking contrast to the greatness of the all-powerful God who reigns in heaven. The goodness and greatness

of Yahweh make the puny idols, **the work of men's hands**, seem even emptier and more foolish.

i. "The psalmist returns to the motif of vanity of idolatry by an extensive quotation from Psa 115:4-8." (VanGemeren)

b. **They have mouths, but they do not speak:** As in several other passages in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Bible mocks those who make or worship idols. The one who makes the statue has a mouth, eyes, and ears superior to the idol itself.

i. **Eyes they have, but they do not see:** "The eyes of idols have frequently been very costly; diamonds have been used for that purpose; but of what avail is the expense, since they see nothing?" (Spurgeon)

ii. "If they cannot even see us, how can they know our wants, appreciate our sacrifices, or spy out for us the means of help? What a wretched thing, that a man who can see should bow down before an image which is blind!" (Spurgeon)

iii. "The Rev. John Thomas, a missionary in India, was one day travelling alone through the country, when he saw a great number of people waiting near an idol temple. He went up to them, and as soon as the doors were opened, he walked into the temple. Seeing an idol raised above the people, he walked boldly up to it, held up his hand, and asked for silence. He then put his fingers on its eyes, and said, "It has eyes, but it cannot see! It has ears, but it cannot hear! It has a nose, but it cannot smell! It has hands, but it cannot handle! It has a mouth, but it cannot speak! Neither is there any breath in it!" Instead of doing injury to him for affronting their god and themselves, the natives were all surprised; and an old Brahmin was so convinced of his folly by what

Mr. Thomas said, that he also cried out, "It has feet, but cannot run away!" The people raised a shout, and being ashamed of their stupidity, they left the temple, and went to their homes." (Cited in Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*)

c. **Those who make them are like them:** Though man is greater than the idol he makes, the creation and honoring of idols make a man or a woman *lower*. Idolatry never exalts man, but rather brings him low.

i. "It is forever true that man becomes like his god, approximates in character and conduct to that which he yields his homage." (Morgan)

ii. "If we worship things that people produce, we will become as impotent and empty as those things, but if we worship God, by the grace of God we will become like God." (Boice)

iii. "Like the material things idolaters serve, idolaters are spiritually dead, they are the mere images of men, their best being is gone, they are not what they seem. Their mouths do not really pray, their eyes see not the truth, their ears hear not the voice of the Lord, and the life of God is not in them." (Spurgeon)

iv. "To put anything of our own creation, whether wealth, or fame, or power, in the place of God, is to begin a process of degradation, the end of which is destructive of everything of high possibility in life." (Morgan)

3. (19-21) *The people of God called to bless and praise Yahweh.*

Bless the LORD, O house of Israel!

Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron!

Bless the LORD, O house of Levi!

You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD!

**Blessed be the LORD out of Zion,
Who dwells in Jerusalem!
Praise the LORD!**

a. **Bless the LORD, O house of Israel:** In a series of three statements, this psalm closes with a call to the descendants of **Israel**, **Aaron**, and **Levi** to honor God and give Him the recognition He deserves.

b. **You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD:** This may be a call to Gentiles who honored God to also join with Israel, the priests, and the Levites in praising and honoring Yahweh.

i. "It may be that this verse is intended to bring in God-fearing men who were not included under Israel, Aaron, and Levi. They were Gentile proselytes, and this verse opens the door and bids them enter."
(Spurgeon)

c. **Blessed be the LORD out of Zion:** Jerusalem was (and is) a special place to God, but His praise, His goodness, His greatness extend **out of Zion**. He is not a local deity; His power and greatness are not limited to Zion.

i. **Who dwells in Jerusalem:** "This clause may be added either to distinguish the true God from the gods which were worshipped in other places and countries; or as a reason why they should bless God, because he had blessed and honoured that place with his gracious and glorious presence." (Poole)

d. **Praise the LORD:** It is fitting for such a soaring psalm to end as it began – to declare God's praise, and to call upon others to do so also.

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Psa 136:1 Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:2 Give thanks to the greatest of all gods; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:3 Give thanks to the mightiest of all lords; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:4 He alone performs great miracles; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:5 By his wisdom he made the heavens; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:6 he built the earth on the deep waters; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:7 He made the sun and the moon; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:8 the sun to rule over the day; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:9 the moon and the stars to rule over the night; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:10 He killed the first-born sons of the Egyptians; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:11 He led the people of Israel out of Egypt; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:12 with his strong hand, his powerful arm; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:13 He divided the Red Sea; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:14 he led his people through it; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:15 but he drowned the king of Egypt and his army; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:16 He led his people through the desert; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:17 He killed powerful kings; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:18 he killed famous kings; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:19 Sihon, king of the Amorites; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:20 and Og, king of Bashan; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:21 He gave their lands to his people; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:22 he gave them to Israel, his servant; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:23 He did not forget us when we were defeated; his love is eternal;

Psa 136:24 he freed us from our enemies; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:25 He gives food to every living creature; his love is eternal.

Psa 136:26 Give thanks to the God of heaven; his love is eternal.

Psalms 136:1-26

Psalms 136 – God’s Never-Ending Mercy

Psalms 136 is a special psalm, with each one of its 26 verses repeating the sentence, His mercy endures forever. Psalms 118 repeated that affirmation five times. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the phrase has somewhat of a liturgical sense to it, as if the assembled people of Israel said or sung this in response to the direction of the Levites leading singing and worship. Ezr 3:11 indicates that this encouragement was part of a responsive singing among God’s people: And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel.”

The sentence is used several other times in the Old Testament, each time in the context of some kind of public praise or declaration. His mercy endures forever is found:

- In David's psalm of praise recorded in 1Ch 16:7 (16:34).
- In the assignments of the priests in David's day (1Ch 16:41).
- In Israel's praise at the dedication of Solomon's temple (2Ch 5:13; 2Ch 7:3; 2Ch 7:6).
- In the record of the LORD's victory over the Ammonites as they praised (2Ch 20:21).
- In the future praise by Israel after the destruction suffered in the Babylonian conquest (Jer 33:10-11).
- In the dedication of Ezra's temple (Ezr 3:11).

We picture a great multitude of the people of God gathered in the temple courts. A priest or Levite would call out a reason to give God thanks, and His people would respond with, "For His mercy endures forever."

"In Jewish tradition Psalms 136 has been called the Great Hallel (or Great Psalm of Praise). It does not use the words hallelu jah, but it is called the Great Hallel for the way it rehearses God's goodness in regard to his people and encourages them to praise him for his merciful and steadfast love." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. The enduring mercy of God from the beginning of time.

1. (1-4) The enduring mercy of God in His essential nature, who He is.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!*

For His mercy *endures* forever.

Oh, give thanks to the God of gods!

For His mercy *endures* forever.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords!

For His mercy *endures* forever:

To Him who alone does great wonders,

For His mercy *endures* forever;

a. **Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good:** As in the previous psalm, Psalms 136 gives thanks and praise to God for His *goodness*. The fact that God **is good** is fundamental to all that He is and does. We know that *God is love* (1Jn 4:8; 1Jn 4:16), and that love is an expression of His goodness. This is a wonderful reason to give Yahweh **thanks**.

i. “*Give thanks* is not the whole meaning of this word...and therefore calls us to thoughtful, grateful worship, spelling out what we know or have found of God’s glory and his deeds.” (Kidner)

ii. “He is good beyond all others; indeed, he alone is good in the highest sense; he is the source of good, the good of all good, the sustainer of good, the perfecter of good, and the rewarder of good. For this he deserves the constant gratitude of his people.” (Spurgeon)

iii. Because we are made in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27), we know something of what is good. However, we are fallen (Rom 5:19), and our knowledge of good is corrupted. Yet our entire concept of *good* is rooted in God and His goodness.

iv. Those who question God’s goodness do so according to some standard of what is good and what is evil. The very existence of that standard connects them to something beyond themselves – back to the Creator who made them in His image.

b. **For His mercy endures forever:** This is the first of 26 times this phrase is repeated in this psalm. It was probably the answer of the congregation of Israel to each first line spoken by the priests or Levites.

i. 1Ch 16:37-41 suggests that **His mercy endures forever** was sung daily as part of the morning and

evening sacrifices.

ii. "Most hymns with a solid, simple chorus become favourites with congregations, and this is sure to have been one of the best beloved." (Spurgeon)

iii. The greatest demonstration of the always-enduring **mercy** of God was seen in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

c. **His mercy endures forever:** The declaration proclaims that God's *hesed* (**mercy**) never ends and will always be given to His people.

i. **Mercy** is the translation of the great Hebrew word *hesed*, which may be understood as Yahweh's grace, His loyal love, His covenant love unto His people. Some scholars have overemphasized its covenant aspect, taking too much *feeling* from the word. *Hesed* combines loyalty to a covenant with true love and mercy.

ii. For centuries it was translated with words like *mercy*, *kindness*, and *love*. In 1927, a scholar named Nelson Glueck (among others) argued that the real idea behind *hesed* was "covenant loyalty" and not so much love or mercy. However, many disagreed and there is no good reason for changing the long-held understanding of *hesed* and taking it as a word that mainly emphasizes covenant loyalty (see R. Laird Harris on *hesed* in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*).

d. **Give thanks to the God of gods...to the Lord of lords:** Reasons are repeatedly found to thank and praise God. Here each reason is connected to *who God is*. He is greater than any of the supposed **gods** or **lords** of the nations. This idea may be drawn from Deu 10:17.

i. **LORD.... God.... Lord:** "The opening stanzas refer to the One to Whom reference is made throughout, by the three great names by which He is known: *Jehovah*, the title of grace (verse 1); *Elohim*, the name of might (verse 2); and *Adonai*, the title of sovereignty (verse 3)." (Morgan)

ii. **The Lord of lords:** "All lords in the plural are summed up in this Lord in the singular: he is more lordly than all emperors and kings condensed into one." (Spurgeon)

e. **To Him who alone does great wonders:** God's people were invited to praise Him as the God of true power and miraculous **wonders**. Most of the rest of this psalm describes many of these **great wonders**, that were and are an expression of His great **mercy**, His *hesed* to His people.

i. "The attributes here mentioned are those of 'goodness' and 'power;' the one renders him willing, the other able to save; and what can we desire more, but that he should continue to be so?" (Horne)

ii. "His works are all great in wonder even when they are not great in size; in fact, in the minute objects of the microscope we behold as great wonders as even the telescope can reveal." (Spurgeon)

iii. It is true that God **alone does great wonders**, and the following lines tell us that creation is the beginning (not the end) of those wonders.

2. (5-9) *The enduring mercy of God in His work as Creator.*

**To Him who by wisdom made the heavens,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
To Him who laid out the earth above the waters,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
To Him who made great lights,**

**For His mercy *endures* forever—
The sun to rule by day,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
The moon and stars to rule by night,
For His mercy *endures* forever.**

a. **To Him who by wisdom made the heavens:** Here the singer refers back to Genesis 1 and points to God's creative work as a demonstration of His never-ending **mercy** to His people.

i. "The psalm looks at the story of Creation from an original point of view, when it rolls out in chorus, after each stage of that work, that its motive lay in the eternal lovingkindness of Jehovah. Creation is an act of Divine love." (Maclaren)

ii. "As far back as the creation his eye had travelled, and all through the stormy, troubled days he could detect the silver thread of mercy. Oh that we had his eyes to see always the love of God!" (Meyer)

iii. "There are no iron tracks, with bars and bolts, to hold the planets in their orbits. Freely in space they move, ever changing, but never changed; poised and balancing; swaying and swayed; disturbing and disturbed, onward they fly, fulfilling with unerring certainty their mighty cycles. The entire system forms one grand complicated piece of celestial machinery; circle within circle, wheel within wheel, cycle within cycle." (*The Orbs of Heaven*, cited by Spurgeon)

b. **Laid out the earth above the waters:** In this section, the work of God as Creator is described with elements from the first four days of creation (Gen 1:1-19). Because each of these is an expression of His never-ending mercy toward His people, we can say that God created the heavens and the earth with His people in mind.

i. "The heavens above and the earth beneath declare the wisdom of their great Maker, and proclaim aloud, to an intelligent ear, the divinity of the hand that formed them. The heavens display the love of God to man; the earth teaches the duty of man to God." (Horne)

ii. "Paul echoed the same truths in Lystra when he taught the Gentiles there that God 'has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy' (Act 14:17)."

iii. The theme of creation in this psalm "...invites the Christian not to wrangle over cosmological theories but to delight in his environment, known to him as no mere mechanism but a work of 'steadfast love'. No unbeliever has grounds for any such quality of joy." (Kidner)

B. The enduring mercy of God to His people.

1. (10-15) The enduring mercy of God in the deliverance from Egypt.

**To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
And brought out Israel from among them,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
To Him who divided the Red Sea in two,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
And made Israel pass through the midst of it,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,
For His mercy *endures* forever;**

a. **To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn:** The previous psalm mentioned the deliverance from Egypt and the striking of the firstborn (Psa 135:8-9). Here again God is praised as the One who rescued Israel from their slavery and degradation in Egypt – another expression of His never-ending

mercy.

i. The singer recounted God's great wonders flowing seamlessly from the work of creation described in Genesis 1 to the work of deliverance described in Exodus. We rightly regard (or should regard) the Exodus account as historical, describing *what really happened*. Therefore, the context and flow of this psalm demonstrates that what God described in Genesis 1 *really happened*. The psalmist does not treat them differently, as if one were a legend and the other actual history.

b. **To Him who divided the Red Sea in two:** God did not only bring the Israelites out of Egypt, but He also delivered them from Pharaoh's attempt to re-capture them. In **mercy** to Israel, God **overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea**.

i. God's use of history in this psalm is important. As in countless other places in the Scriptures, God used His work in the past to give hope, faith, and confidence to His people both for the moment and for the future.

ii. "The word for dividing the Red Sea is peculiar. It means to hew in pieces or in two, and is used for cutting in halves the child in Solomon's judgment [1Ki 3:25]; while the word 'parts' [two] is a noun from the same root, and is found in Gen 15:17, to describe the two portions into which Abraham clave the carcasses. Thus, as with a sword, Jehovah hewed the sea in two, and His people passed between the

parts, as between the halves of the covenant sacrifice." (Maclaren)

iii. **Overthrew Pharaoh and his army:** "...as in Hebrew, *shaked off*. The word is applicable to a tree shaking off its foliage, Isa 33:9. The same word is used in Exo 14:27 : 'And the Lord overthrew (*shook off*) the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.'" (Barnes, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (16-22) *The enduring mercy of God from the wilderness to the Promised Land.*

**To Him who led His people through the wilderness,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
To Him who struck down great kings,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
And slew famous kings,
For His mercy *endures* forever—
Sihon king of the Amorites,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
And Og king of Bashan,
For His mercy *endures* forever—
And gave their land as a heritage,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
A heritage to Israel His servant,
For His mercy *endures* forever.**

a. **To Him who led His people through the wilderness:** This short statement is a reminder of many mighty and loving acts of God. Yahweh provided guidance, food, water, structure, leadership, healing, victory, and many other things to Israel **through the wilderness**.

i. "It was an astonishing miracle of God to support so many hundreds of thousands of people in a wilderness totally deprived of all necessities for the life of man, and that for the space of *forty* years." (Clarke)

ii. "...through that vast howling wilderness, where there was neither way nor provision; through which none but the Almighty God could have safely conducted them." (Poole)

iii. This was a great demonstration of God's never-failing **mercy**. "Their conduct in the wilderness tested his mercy most severely, but it bore the strain; many a time he forgave them; and though he smote them for their transgressions, yet he waited to be gracious and speedily turned to them in compassion." (Spurgeon)

b. **To Him who struck down great kings:** The previous psalm described the defeat of **Sihon king of the Amorites** and **Og king of Bashan**, as well as the giving of Canaan to Israel **as a heritage** (Psa 135:10-12). These were all demonstrations of the never-ending **mercy** of God.

i. **Great kings:** "Great, as those times accounted them, when almost every small city had their king; Canaan had thirty and more of them. Great also in regard of their stature and strength; for they were of the giant's race, Deu 3:11-13, Amo 2:9." (Trapp)

ii. "The Lord who smote Pharaoh at the beginning of the wilderness march, smote Sihon and Og at the close of it." (Spurgeon)

iii. **And slew famous kings:** "What good was their fame to them? As they opposed God they became infamous rather than famous. Their deaths made the Lord's fame to increase among the nations while their fame ended in disgraceful defeat." (Spurgeon)

3. (23-25) *The enduring mercy of God in ongoing deliverance and help.*

**Who remembered us in our lowly state,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
And rescued us from our enemies,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
Who gives food to all flesh,
For His mercy *endures* forever.**

a. **Who remembered us in our lowly state:** The song makes a sharp yet skillful transition from God's great wonders of the past to His faithful help in the present. It is good for us to look to the past for evidence that **His mercy endures forever**, but even better for us to see the evidence in our own day.

i. "After all, 'his steadfast love endures for ever', and the refrain is designed to show the relevance of every act of God to every singer of the psalm." (Kidner)

ii. **Rescued us from our enemies:** "Sin is our enemy, and we are redeemed from it by the atoning blood; Satan is our enemy and we are redeemed from him by the Redeemer's power; the world is our enemy, and we are redeemed from it by the Holy Spirit." (Spurgeon)

b. **Who gives food to all flesh:** The psalmist asked God's people to praise and thank Him not only for His work as *deliverer*, but also as *provider*. This is more evidence of God's never-ending **mercy**, which is extended to **all flesh**, not only to Israel.

i. **Food to all flesh:** "...by whose *universal providence* every intellectual and animal being is supported and preserved. The appointing every *living thing food*, and that sort of food which is suited to its nature, (and the nature and habits of animals are endlessly diversified,) is an overwhelming proof of the wondrous providence, wisdom, and goodness of God." (Clarke)

ii. "He promised to Noah and to all 'flesh' to sustain it with his grace (cf. Gen 9:8-17). Here the psalmist makes use of the word 'flesh'...and thus makes an allusion to God's promise (cf. Gen 9:11; Gen 9:15-17)."

 (VanGemeren)

4. (26) *Gratitude to the God of enduring mercy.*

Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven!

For His mercy endures forever.

a. **Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven:** In directing us to do this, the psalmist not only had in mind our appropriate gratitude, but also reminds us that the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is **the God of heaven**. He is the God who really exists and really reigns.

i. **God of heaven:** "Therefore the final call to praise, which rounds off the psalm by echoing its beginning, does not name Him by the Name which implied Israel's special relation, but by that by which other peoples could and did address Him, "the God of heaven," from whom all good comes down on all the earth." (Maclaren)

ii. "His mercy in providing heaven for his people is more than all the rest." (Trapp)

b. **For His mercy endures forever:** The singer has given us many reasons to respond to God with this statement, and we are persuaded. The never-ending **mercy** of God – His lovingkindness, His grace, His loyal love – will never stop finding a way to bless and help His people.

i. "And do you suppose that such mercy is going to fail you? It endureth forever! You fret and chafe like a restless little child; but you cannot fall out of the arms of God's mercy." (Meyer)

ii. Spurgeon suggested many things that Psalms 136 as a whole teaches:

- The past, present, or future will not end His mercy.
- The storms of life will not end His mercy.
- Distance from loved ones will not end His mercy.
- Death itself will not end His mercy.
- God's never-ending mercy should make us merciful to others.
- God's never-ending mercy should make us hopeful for others.
- God's never-ending mercy should make us hopeful for ourselves.

iii. "One night in February 358 A.D. the church father Athanasius held an all-night service at his church in Alexandria, Egypt. He had been leading the fight for the eternal sonship and deity of Jesus Christ, knowing that the survival of Christianity depended on it. He had many enemies – for political even more than theological reasons – and they moved the power of the Roman government against him. That night the church was surrounded by soldiers with drawn swords. People were frightened. With calm presence of mind Athanasius announced the singing of Psalms 136. The vast congregation responded, thundering forth twenty-six times, 'His love endures forever.' When the soldiers burst through the doors they were staggered by the singing. Athanasius kept his place until the congregation was dispersed. Then he too disappeared in the darkness and found refuge with his friends." (Boice)

iv. "Many citizens of Alexandria were killed that night, but the people of Athanasius's congregation never

forgot that although man is evil, God is good. He is superlatively good, and 'his love endures forever.'" (Boice)

How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song?

Psa 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; there we wept when we remembered Zion.

Psa 137:2 On the willows near by we hung up our harps.

Psa 137:3 Those who captured us told us to sing; they told us to entertain them: "Sing us a song about Zion."

Psa 137:4 How can we sing a song to the LORD in a foreign land?

Psa 137:5 May I never be able to play the harp again if I forget you, Jerusalem!

Psa 137:6 May I never be able to sing again if I do not remember you, if I do not think of you as my greatest joy!

Psa 137:7 Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did the day Jerusalem was captured. Remember how they kept saying, "Tear it down to the ground!"

Psa 137:8 Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy are those who pay you back for what you have done to us—

Psa 137:9 who take your babies and smash them against a rock.

Psalms 137:1-9

Psalms 137 – The Mournful Song of the Exiles

Because this psalm is a remembrance of Babylon, many commentators believe it was written after the return from exile. It may also have been written many years into the exile.

A. Singing to the self.

1. (1-3) Mourning by Babylon's rivers.

**By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept
When we remembered Zion.
We hung our harps
Upon the willows in the midst of it.
For there those who carried us away captive asked of
us a song,
And those who plundered us *requested* mirth,
Saying, "Sing us *one of the songs of Zion!*"**

a. **By the rivers of Babylon:** This song of the exile puts us on the shore of one of Babylon's mighty rivers, likely the Euphrates. Judea and the whole of Israel had no mighty river comparable to the Euphrates, so it would certainly make an impression upon the forced refugee from Judea to Babylonia.

i. **Rivers of Babylon:** "These might have been the *Tigris* and *Euphrates*, or their *branches*, or *streams* that flowed into them. In their captivity and dispersion, it was customary for the Jews to hold their religious meetings on the banks of rivers. Mention is made of this in Act 16:13, where we find the Jews of Philippi resorting to a *river side, where prayer was wont to be made.*" (Clarke)

ii. Based on verse 1, Horne suggested this cry of mourning from a repentant one: "O Lord, I am an Israelite, exiled by my sins from thy holy city, and left here to mourn in this Babylon, the land of my captivity. Here I dwell in sorrow, by these transient waters, musing on the restless and unstable nature of earthly pleasures."

b. **There we sat down, yea, we wept:** The immense **rivers of Babylon** said to the exiled one, *you're not home any more*. As they **remembered Zion**, they wept.

- They wept over the death of so many loved ones.

- They wept over the loss of almost everything they owned.
- They wept over the destroyed city of Jerusalem and her great temple.
- They wept over the agony of a forced march from Judea to Babylon.
- They wept over the cruelty of their captors.
- They wept over the loss of such a pleasant and blessed past.
- They wept over the forced captivity of their present.
- They wept over the bleak nature of their future.
- They wept over their sin that invited such judgment from God.

i. "The English words are sad, even mournful, but the words have an even sadder sound in the Hebrew language. Verses 1-3, which lead up to and explain the pathetic question of verse 4, repeat nine times the pronoun ending *nu* (meaning 'we' or 'our'), which sounds mournful. It is like crying 'ohhh' or 'woe' repeatedly." (Boice)

c. **We hung our harps upon the willows:** The singer used poetic liberty to present a striking scene. Large willow trees grew on the shores of the great river, and because there were no songs left in these captives, they **hung** their **harps** on those willow trees.

i. "Many singers were carried captives: Ezr 2:41. These would of course take their instruments with them." (Horne)

ii. "The *arabim* or *willows* were very plentiful in Babylon. The great quantity of them that were on the

banks of the *Euphrates* caused Isaiah, Isa 15:7, to call it *the brook or river of willows*." (Clarke)

iii. "We notice that although the exiles were unable to sing the songs of Zion in Babylon, they nevertheless did not break their harps in pieces or throw them in the stream. Instead they hung them on the poplars, presumably saving them for what would surely be a better day." (Boice)

d. **Sing us one of the songs of Zion:** This was the cruel demand of **those who carried us away captive**. They asked for one of the famous **songs of Zion**. The ones who **plundered** the people of God now wanted them to entertain them. Yet there was no song left in them; their harps had been hung in the trees.

i. "So, like tipsy revellers, they called out 'Sing!' The request drove the iron deeper into sad hearts, for it came from those who had made the misery. They had led away the captives, and now they bid them make sport." (Maclaren)

ii. "A relief from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, in the neighbouring land of Assyria, portrays a situation not unlike this, with three prisoners of war playing lyres as they are marched along by an armed soldier." (Kidner)

iii. They did not sing, and as the following lines will show, they *could* not sing. "Yet, there was a song in the silence, not heard of the cruel oppressors, but heard of Jehovah Himself. It was the song of the heart, remembering Jerusalem, counting it the chief joy of life." (Morgan)

2. (4-6) *A vow to remember Jerusalem, even in exile.*

**How shall we sing the LORD's song
In a foreign land?**

**If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget *its skill*!
If I do not remember you,
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.**

a. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? Though their conquerors wanted them to sing for their own amusement, the song simply wasn't there. The songs of God's people were more than performances; they came from their relationship with God. It would take a long time to sing those songs **in a foreign land**.

i. "They sought to be amused by these people of a strange religion, and the request was in itself an insult of their faith. It was impossible, and they refused to sing the song of Jehovah. To have done so would have been to play traitor to their own lost city, and to all that their citizenship stood for." (Morgan)

ii. F.B. Meyer took the idea of not being able to sing and used it as an admonishment for Christians: "You have ceased singing lately. The joy of your religious life has vanished. You pass through the old routine, but without the exhilaration of former days. Can you not tell the reason? It is not because your circumstances are depressed, though they may be; for Paul and Silas sang praises to God in their prison. Is not disobedience at the root of your songlessness? You have allowed some little rift to come within the lute of your life, which has been slowly widening, and now threatens to silence all. And you never will be able to resume that song until you have put away the evil of your doing, and have returned from the land of the enemy."

b. **If I forget you, O Jerusalem:** The singer vowed that he would never forget God's holy city, and even gave a curse upon himself if he did. If he did **forget**, then his **right hand** could lose its skill to play the harp. If he failed to **remember**, then his **tongue** would lose its ability to sing.

i. "The godly could not forget Jerusalem and everything it stands for: covenant, temple, presence and kingship of God, atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation. They vowed never to forget God's promises and to persevere, waiting for the moment of redemption." (VanGemeren)

ii. **Forget its skill:** "In the Hebrew it is only *forget*, without expressing what, to intimate the extent and generality of this wish; Let it forget or be disenabled not only for playing, but for every action in which it was formerly used." (Poole)

iii. The Puritan commentator John Trapp (1601-1699) observed this about the Jewish people of his time: "The Jews at this day, when they build a house, they are, say the Rabbis, to leave one part of it unfinished and lying rude, in remembrance that Jerusalem and the temple are at present desolate. At least, they use to leave about a yard square of the house unplastered, on which they write, in great letters, this of the psalmist, 'If I forget Jerusalem,' etc., or else these words, *Zecher leehorban*, that is, The memory of the desolation (Leo Modena of the Rites of the Jews)."

B. Singing about the nations.

1. (7) *Remember Edom.*

**Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom
The day of Jerusalem,**

**Who said, “Raze it, raze it,
To its very foundation!”**

a. Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom:

The psalmist directed his words to God, asking Him to remember the people of **Edom** (to the south east of Israel) for their conduct during the conquest of Jerusalem. In this case, the call to **remember** was a call to oppose and to judge.

i. “It appears from Jer 12:6; Jer 25:14; Lam 4:21-22; Eze 25:12; Oba 1:11-14; that the *Idumeans* [Edomites] joined the army of Nebuchadnezzar against their brethren the Jews; and that they were main instruments in razing the walls of Jerusalem even to the ground.” (Clarke)

ii. The small book of Obadiah is a prophetic pronouncement against the Edomites for their part in the conquest of Judea. *Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress* (Oba 1:12).

b. Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation: The Edomites were a sister-nation to Israel, having descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (Israel). They should have supported and sympathized with Jerusalem when the Babylonians came against it. Instead, they enjoyed Jerusalem’s agony and wanted the city to be completely destroyed.

i. “The word ‘foundations’...implies more than the actual foundations of the walls of Jerusalem, as it also pertains to the God-established order in creation, in his rule, and in his election of a people to himself (cf. Psa 24:2; Psa 78:69; Psa 89:11; Psa 104:5). The Edomites were hoping for the destruction of the

'foundations' of Yahweh's rule on earth."
(VanGemeren)

ii. "It is horrible for neighbours to be enemies, worse for them to show their enmity in times of great affliction, worst of all for neighbours to egg others on to malicious deeds." (Spurgeon)

2. (8-9) *Judge Babylon.*

**O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed,
Happy the one who repays you as you have served us!
Happy the one who takes and dashes
Your little ones against the rock!**

a. **O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed:**
The psalmist directed his words to future generations of the Babylonian empire, giving them notice that they themselves would **be destroyed** in God's judgment.

i. It is interesting that the psalmist did not make this a prayer to God as he did regarding Edom in the previous verse. Perhaps he regarded the judgment of Babylon to be so certain that it didn't need his prayer, only his pronouncement, especially in light of other prophecies.

b. **Happy the one who repays you as you have served us:** This is a blessing on the one who brings judgment against the Babylonians, and a judgment corresponding to what the Babylonians **served** unto Jerusalem and Judea.

i. "There is ample evidence that 'to dash in pieces their little ones' was a common enough sequel to a heathen victory, and that Babylon had been in no mood for restraint at the fall of Jerusalem (2Ki 25:7; Lam 5:11 f.)." (Kidner)

c. **Happy the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock:** This awful blessing is

understood in light of the previous line. No doubt the singer had seen this done to the **little ones** of Jerusalem, and the horrible image was seared upon his mind. He prayed that the Babylonians would get as they had given.

i. We sympathize with the impulse of the psalmist, yet the New Testament calls us to a higher standard: "Our response should be to recognize that our calling, since the cross, is to pray down reconciliation, not judgment" (Boice).

ii. "Perhaps, if some of their modern critics had been under the yoke from which this psalmist has been delivered, they would have understood a little better how a good man of that age could rejoice that Babylon was fallen and all its race extirpated." (Maclaren)

iii. "Let those find fault with it who have never seen their temple burned, their city ruined, their wives ravished, and their children slain; they might not, perhaps, be quite so velvet-mouthed if they had suffered after this fashion." (Spurgeon)

iv. The psalmist also may have known of Isaiah's prophecy that announced that just this would happen: *Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes* (Isa 13:16).

v. "Today the fortresses of ancient Edom are a desolate waste, and the site of ancient Babylon is a ruin. God cannot be mocked." (Boice)

Give Thanks to the Lord

Psa 138:1 I thank you, LORD, with all my heart; I sing praise to you before the gods.

Psa 138:2 I face your holy Temple, bow down, and praise your name because of your constant love and faithfulness,

because you have shown that your name and your commands are supreme.

Psa 138:3 You answered me when I called to you; with your strength you strengthened me.

Psa 138:4 All the kings in the world will praise you, LORD, because they have heard your promises.

Psa 138:5 They will sing about what you have done and about your great glory.

Psa 138:6 Even though you are so high above, you care for the lowly, and the proud cannot hide from you.

Psa 138:7 When I am surrounded by troubles, you keep me safe. You oppose my angry enemies and save me by your power.

Psa 138:8 You will do everything you have promised; LORD, your love is eternal. Complete the work that you have begun.

Psalms 138:1-8

Psalms 138 – God’s Promise to Honor His Word and to Complete His Work

*This psalm is titled **A Psalm of David**. Several commentators mention that it was fittingly placed next to Psalms 137, which described the inability of the psalmist to sing before the heathen. Psalms 138 is a declaration that even the kings of the nations will praise Yahweh.*

"This Psalm is wisely placed. Whoever edited and arranged these sacred poems, he had an eye to apposition and contrast; for if in Psalms 137 we see the need of silence before revilers, here we see the excellence of a brave confession. There is a time to be silent, lest we cast pearls before swine; and there is a time to speak openly, lest we be found guilty of cowardly non-confession." (Charles Spurgeon)

"There is a fine blend of boldness and humility from the outset: boldness to confess the Lord before the gods, humility to bow down before him." (Derek Kidner)

A. Declaration of praise for the past.

1. (1-2a) The declaration of praise.

**I will praise You with my whole heart;
Before the gods I will sing praises to You.
I will worship toward Your holy temple,
And praise Your name**

a. **I will praise You with my whole heart:** David began this song with a bold declaration – that he would hold nothing back in his **praise** to God. It would be done with all his being, with his **whole heart**.

i. **My whole heart:** "We need a broken heart to mourn our own sins, but a whole heart to praise the Lord's perfections." (Spurgeon)

ii. "'With the whole heart' leaves no room for mixed motives of divided devotion." (Morgan)

b. **Before the gods I will sing praises to You:** We can't imagine that David meant he would praise Yahweh in the actual presence of idols and images of other **gods**. There are three ideas about what David meant by his singing praise **before the gods** (*elohim*).

- Perhaps it was a declaration of allegiance to Yahweh and Him alone, and **the gods** represent the idols of the heathen.
- Perhaps **gods** (*elohim*) in this context refer to angelic beings, as in a few other places in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- Perhaps **gods** refers to kings or judges, such as are spoken of later in verse 4.

i. "A witness against the impotence of idols.... Praise belongs to the Lord alone and not to the gods of the nations, whose kings will have to submit to the Lord."
(VanGemeren)

c. **I will worship toward Your holy temple:** Even when David was not at the temple, he recognized it as God's appointed place for worship and sacrifice. He would worship according to God's direction.

i. "Wheresoever I am the face of my soul shall turn, like the needle of a dial, by sacred instinct, towards thee, in the ark of thy presence, in the Son of thy love." (Trapp)

2. (2b-3) Reasons for praise.

**For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.**

**In the day when I cried out, You answered me,
And made me bold *with* strength in my soul.**

a. **For Your lovingkindness and Your truth:** David's praise was not empty adoration. It had reasons behind it, which were a basis for it. He thought of the great **lovingkindness** (*hesed*) of God toward him, and God's firmly established **truth**. Meditation on those gifts from God gave David a basis for his spirit of praise.

b. **For You have magnified Your word above all Your name:** Having mentioned God's **truth** in the previous line, now David considered the main way God's truth is communicated to us – through His **word**. God has such a high estimation of His **word** that He has **magnified** it **above** His very **name**, His character.

i. This is a stunning and remarkable statement, showing the incredible regard God has for His own

word. He holds His **word** in greater esteem than His very character or name.

ii. "It would be as if God is saying, 'I value my integrity above everything else. Above everything else I want to be believed.' The verse does not have to mean that God's other qualities are moved to second place." (Boice)

iii. Charles Spurgeon explained his confidence in complete, God-spoken, inspiration of the Bible: "We believe in plenary verbal inspiration, with all its difficulties, for there are not half as many difficulties in that doctrine as there are in any other kind of inspiration that men may imagine. If this Book be not the real solid foundation of our religion, what have we to build upon? If God has spoken a lie, where are we, brethren?"

c. **In the day when I cried out, You answered me:** David also had very practical reasons to praise and thank God. The LORD had **answered** and rescued him many times. When David's strength failed, God made him **bold with strength** in his **soul**.

i. We notice an important pattern in the reasons David gave for his praise. It is important to praise God for who He is, even more than for what He has done for us.

- First he gave God praise for who He is – a God of **lovingkindness** and **truth**.

- Then he gave God praise for His revelation – the **word**, magnified above His very name.

- Then he gave God praise for *what He had done* – God's response to David in a time of crisis.

ii. **Made me bold:** "The psalmist uses a remarkable expression, in saying that Jehovah had made him

bold, or, as the word is literally, proud.” (Maclaren)

iii. “If the burden was not removed, yet strength was given wherewith to bear it, and this is an equally effective method of help.” (Spurgeon)

B. Declaration of confidence for the future.

1. (4-6) Praise from the kings of the earth.

**All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O LORD,
When they hear the words of Your mouth.**

**Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
For great *is* the glory of the LORD.**

Though the LORD is on high,

Yet He regards the lowly;

But the proud He knows from afar.

a. **All the kings of the earth shall praise You:** David was king of Israel and gave praise to the LORD, but he also knew the day would come when **all the kings of the earth** would praise Him. They would praise Him in response to hearing **the words of** His **mouth** from those who proclaim.

i. Morgan saw a connection between the answered prayer of verses 2-3 and the praise of kings described here: “The reason of praise is next declared to be that of lovingkindness and truth as already proved. The effect of praise is to be that of the revelation of God to others, who if they come to know Him, will also praise Him.”

ii. **When they hear the words of Your mouth:** “It probably means when those who know God declare his words to them. In other words, the psalm is acknowledging the need for the people of God to be missionaries.” (Boice)

b. **They shall sing of the ways of the LORD:** The kings of the earth would not only praise Yahweh with

words, but also in song. This was in response to their understanding that **great is the glory of the LORD**.

c. **Yet He regards the lowly**: David understood that God is great in glory and **on high**, yet He holds **the lowly**, the humble, in high regard. On the other hand, God keeps His distance from **the proud**.

i. "Infinitely *great* as God is, he regards even the lowest and most inconsiderable part of his creation; but the *humble* and *afflicted* man attracts his notice particularly." (Clarke)

ii. "**Unto the lowly**; unto such as are mean and obscure in the world; to me, a poor contemptible shepherd, whom he hath preferred before great princes, and to such as are little in their own eyes." (Poole)

iii. David's statement that God **regards the lowly, but the proud He knows from afar** is another way of saying a truth from Pro 3:34 that is repeated twice in the New Testament: *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5).

iv. "Low things he looketh close upon, that he may raise them higher; lofty things he knoweth afar off, that he may crush them down lower. The proud Pharisee pressed as near God as he could; the poor publican, not daring to do so, stood aloof off; yet was God far from the Pharisee, near to the publican." (Trapp)

v. "Proud men boast loudly of their culture and '*the freedom of thought*,' and even dare to criticize their Maker: but he knows them from afar, and will keep them at arm's length in this life, and shut them up in hell in the next." (Spurgeon)

2. (7-8) *David's firm confidence for the future.*

**Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand
Against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.
The LORD will perfect *that which* concerns me;
Your mercy, O LORD, *endures* forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.**

a. **Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me:** As David considered the greatness of God and His kindness to the humble (verses 4-6), it gave him confidence that God would **revive** him in his present **trouble**. Understanding God's greatness and kindness builds our faith.

b. **Your right hand will save me:** When God's help came, it would come with all His skill and strength (**Your right hand**). God would defend David **against the wrath** of his **enemies**.

i. "Thou shalt strike them with thy left hand, and save me with thy right." (Trapp)

ii. "Adversaries may be many, and malicious, and mighty; but our glorious Defender has only to stretch out his arm and their armies vanish." (Spurgeon)

c. **The LORD will perfect that which concerns me:** This was David's confident declaration. He knew that God had a plan concerning him, and this God of greatness and goodness would absolutely **perfect** that plan.

i. "This is the language of utmost confidence.... The hope is based, not upon the determination of the singer, but upon Jehovah." (Morgan)

ii. This is another way of stating the great promise of Php 1:6 : *being confident of this very thing, that He*

who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

iii. David could think of the particular promise (2 Samuel 7) that God had made concerning him – that his descendants would rule forever, especially fulfilled in the Messiah. The principle is true for every believer regarding the promise and course of life God has appointed for him.

iv. Maclaren noted the connection between the phrases **the LORD will perfect** and

Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever: “Because Jehovah’s lovingkindness endures forever, every man on whom His shaping Spirit has begun to work, or His grace in any form to bestow its gifts, may be sure that no exhaustion or change of these is possible.”

d. **Do not forsake the works of Your hands:** With confidence in the never-ending **mercy** (*hesed*) of Yahweh, David knew that God would never forsake him, who belonged to God by creation and redemption.

i. “Look upon the wounds of thy hands, and forsake not the works of thy hands, prayed Queen Elizabeth. And Luther’s usual prayer was, Confirm, O God, in us that thou hast wrought, and perfect the work that thou hast begun in us, to thy glory; so be it.” (Trapp)

ii. His creating hands formed our souls at the beginning; his nail-pierced hands redeemed them on Calvary; his glorified hands will hold our souls fast and not let them go for ever.” (Burgon, cited in Spurgeon)

Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart

Psa 139:1 LORD, you have examined me and you know me.

Psa 139:2 You know everything I do; from far away you understand all my thoughts.

Psa 139:3 You see me, whether I am working or resting; you know all my actions.

Psa 139:4 Even before I speak, you already know what I will say.

Psa 139:5 You are all around me on every side; you protect me with your power.

Psa 139:6 Your knowledge of me is too deep; it is beyond my understanding.

Psa 139:7 Where could I go to escape from you? Where could I get away from your presence?

Psa 139:8 If I went up to heaven, you would be there; if I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there.

Psa 139:9 If I flew away beyond the east or lived in the farthest place in the west,

Psa 139:10 you would be there to lead me, you would be there to help me.

Psa 139:11 I could ask the darkness to hide me or the light around me to turn into night,

Psa 139:12 but even darkness is not dark for you, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

Psa 139:13 You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb.

Psa 139:14 I praise you because you are to be feared; all you do is strange and wonderful. I know it with all my heart.

Psa 139:15 When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there—

Psa 139:16 you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before

any of them ever began.

Psa 139:17 O God, how difficult I find your thoughts; how many of them there are!

Psa 139:18 If I counted them, they would be more than the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

Psa 139:19 O God, how I wish you would kill the wicked! How I wish violent people would leave me alone!

Psa 139:20 They say wicked things about you; they speak evil things against your name.

Psa 139:21 O LORD, how I hate those who hate you! How I despise those who rebel against you!

Psa 139:22 I hate them with a total hatred; I regard them as my enemies.

Psa 139:23 Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts.

Psa 139:24 Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way.

Psalms 139:1-24

Psalms 139 – Praise and Prayer to the God Who Knows All and Is Everywhere

*This magnificent psalm is titled **For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David**. It does not surprise us that such a significant psalm came from David's pen, who was "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2Sa 23:1). **The Chief Musician** is thought by some to be the LORD God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:4-7; 1Ch 25:6).*

"Let the modern wits, after this, look upon the honest shepherds of Palestine as a company of rude and unpolished clowns; let them, if they can, produce from profane authors thoughts that are more sublime, more delicate, or better

turned; not to mention the sound divinity and solid piety which are apparent under these expressions.” (Claude Fleury, cited in Charles Spurgeon)

A. The greatness of God touches my life.

1. (1-6) The all-knowing God knows me.

**O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.
You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
For *there is* not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
Such knowledge *is* too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot *attain* it.**

a. **You have searched me and known me:** David prayed to Yahweh, understanding that He had personal knowledge of him. Pagans often thought that their gods were hostile or indifferent to men and women; David knew that the true God cared enough to have **searched** and **known** each man and woman.

- It's not just that God knows everything – *He knows me.*
- It's not just that God is everywhere – *He is everywhere with me.*
- It's not just that God created everything – *He created me.*

i. “Any small thoughts that we may have of God are magnificently transcended by this psalm; yet for all its height and depth it remains intensely personal from first to last.” (Kidner)

ii. "All my postures, gestures, practices...whether I sit, stand, walk, lie; thou searchest and knowest all. Some search, but know not; thou dost both." (Trapp)

b. **You know my sitting down and my rising up:** David used this proverbial phrase to say that God knew *everything* about him, even the most everyday things. As Jesus would later say, God knows the number of hairs on our head (Mat 10:30).

i. "Even these inconsiderable and casual things are under thy continual notice. I cannot so much as *take a seat*, or *leave it*, without being marked by thee." (Clarke)

ii. VanGemen points out that when looking **You know** (verse 2) and *You covered* (verse 13) in the Hebrew grammar, the emphasis is on **You**. "This section continues the emphasis on divine involvement by an emphatic use of 'you'."

c. **You understand my thought afar off:** God not only knew the smallest aspects of David's everyday life; He also knew his *thoughts*. God knows our words before we speak them, and there is nothing of us hidden from the all-knowing God. As David wrote, You **are acquainted with all my ways**.

i. "Divine knowledge is perfect, since not a single word is unknown, nay, not even an unspoken word, and each one is '*altogether*' or wholly known." (Spurgeon)

ii. The fact that God knows every **word on my tongue** should affect my speech. Those who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ, yet use profanity or impurity of speech, should remember that God hears and knows every word.

d. **You have hedged me behind and before:** The normal sense of a *hedge* in the Bible is of a protective

barrier. God **hedged** David on every side, so that nothing could come to David unless it first passed through God's permission. What was true for David is true for all who trust in the LORD.

i. It can be very uncomfortable to know that you are always being watched. We may get nervous if we see video cameras monitoring us at all times. Yet our unease is based on the fact that we doubt the good intentions or good will of those who watch us. The child is comforted that a loving parent watches over him; when we are confident in the love and care of God our Father, His constant knowledge of us is a comfort rather than a curse.

e. **And laid Your hand upon me:** As with the hedge, this was an expression of God's love and care for David. This was not the hand of oppression, but the hand of grace.

i. "This statement of omniscience is characteristically vivid and concrete: not formulated as a doctrine but, as befits a psalm, confessed in adoration. This divine knowledge is not merely comprehensive, like that of some receptor that misses nothing, capturing everything alike. It is personal and active." (Kidner)

f. **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me:** David understood that God knew him *better than he knew himself*, a wonderful and humble place to be. We sometimes reject what God and His word say about us and our condition; we should recognize that He knows us better than we know ourselves.

i. **Too wonderful for me:** "I cannot grasp it. I can hardly endure to think of it. The theme overwhelms me. I am amazed and astounded at it. Such knowledge not only surpasses my comprehension, but even my imagination." (Spurgeon)

2. (7-12) *The all-present God is with me.*

Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;

If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.

If I take the wings of the morning,

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

Even there Your hand shall lead me,

And Your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"

Even the night shall be light about me;

Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,

But the night shines as the day;

The darkness and the light *are both alike to You*.

a. **Where can I go from Your Spirit:** David considered the truth that God is present everywhere, and there is no corner or dimension of the universe hidden from Him. **Heaven** isn't too high and **hell** isn't too low; God is everywhere.

i. "Here he argueth God's omniscience from his omnipresence." (Trapp)

ii. "The psalmist is not trying to evade God, but he further amplifies that God's knowledge is beyond the ability of humans to grasp. The knowledge or discernment of God can never be limited to any particular place, because God's sovereignty extends to the whole created universe." (VanGemenen)

iii. "The Psalmist speaks of God as a Person everywhere present in creation, yet distinct from creation. In these verses he says, '*Thy spirit...thy presence...thou art there...thy hand...thy right hand...darkness hideth not from thee.*' God is everywhere, but he is not everything." (Jones, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Your Spirit?.... Your presence?** David probably did not have a deep understanding of Trinitarian theology, but by the inspiration of God he spoke of God's **Spirit** as an essential aspect of His being and **presence**.

i. **From Your presence:** "*Mippaneycha*, 'from thy faces.' Why do we meet with this word so frequently in the *plural* number, when applied to God? And why have we his *Spirit*, and his *appearances* or *faces*, both here? A *Trinitarian* would at once say, 'The plurality of persons in the Godhead is intended;' and who can *prove* that he is mistaken?" (Clarke)

ii. "The presence of God's glory is in heaven; the presence of his power on earth; the presence of his justice in hell; and the presence of his grace with his people." (Mason, cited in Spurgeon)

c. **If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there:** David did not describe what we normally think of as *hell* – Gehenna (Mat 10:28; Mat 18:9), the lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15). The Hebrew word here is *sheol*, which normally has the sense of *the grave* or by implication *the afterlife*.

i. Though David did not use the specific word for **hell**, the sense would be the same. Even in hell, God will be present because there is no place where God cannot be. Yet God's presence in hell will radiate none of His love and grace – only His righteous judgment.

ii. "Heaven is the seat of his glory, creation the scene of his providence, and the grave itself will be the theatre of his power." (Horne)

iii. "Thou art in *heaven*, in thy glory; in *hell*, in thy vindictive justice; and in all *parts of earth, water, space, place, or vacuity*, by thy *omnipresence*." (Clarke)

d. **Wings of the morning:** This may well refer to the spread and speed of light as it fills the morning sky from the east to the west. Light itself can not outrun God's presence and knowledge.

i. "Light flies with inconceivable rapidity, and it flashes far afield beyond all human ken; it illuminates the great and wide sea, and sets its waves gleaming afar; but its speed would utterly fail if employed in flying from the Lord." (Spurgeon)

e. **Even there Your hand shall lead me:** David was so assured of the constant presence of God's **hand** of love and care that not even death and the grave could separate him from God's love – as Paul would later write in Rom 8:38-39. In fact, God's **right hand** – His hand of skill and strength – would **hold** David no matter what may come.

i. "The piety and charity which are patiently endured in the field, and on the bed of sickness; the misery and torment inflicted by persecution in the mines, the galleys, and the dungeons; all are under the inspection of Jehovah, and are noted down by him against the day of recompense." (Horne)

f. **Even the night shall be light about me:** God's presence with David was like a constant light in the darkness. As the pillar of cloud illuminated Israel in the wilderness (Exo 13:21), so with God's presence **the night shines as the day**.

i. "Darkness may, indeed, conceal us and our deeds from the sight of men; but the divine presence, like that of the sun, turns night into day, and makes all things manifest before God." (Horne)

ii. "Darkness is light to Him, and has no hiding place from Him." (Morgan)

3. (13-16) *The eternal God formed me.*

**For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When *as yet there were none of them.***

a. **For You formed my inward parts:** The God of all knowledge and constant presence had the care and concern to personally form the child in his **mother's womb**. It speaks of the fact that God knew David from before his birth, as a child conceived and developing in the womb.

i. That fact that God knows and cares for children *in the womb* means that God's concern for life begins at conception. It means that God's people have a responsibility to also know and care for children in the womb.

ii. Some people argue for the moral right to have an abortion because the mother has the right to do as she pleases with her own body. Psalms 139 demonstrates that God sees *another person* in the mother's womb.

b. **I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:** David the son of Jesse was a remarkable man. He was a shepherd, a special forces

soldier, a hero, a poet, and a king. In some respects, here he also added *scientist* to his accomplishments. With the mind of a trained biologist but the skill of a poet, David declared that he was **fearfully and wonderfully made**.

i. The workings of the human body are stunning in their design and execution. We know far more than David ever did about how we are **made**, and it should make us full of more awe and praise than David ever had.

ii. "Thy infinite power and wisdom, manifested in the rare and curious structure of man's body, doth fill me with wonder and astonishment, and with the dread of thy majesty." (Poole)

iii. "The Psalmist had scarcely peered within the veil which hides the nerves, sinews, and blood-vessels from common inspection; the science of anatomy was quite unknown to him; and yet he had seen enough to arouse his admiration of the work and his reverence for the Worker." (Spurgeon)

iv. "The greatest miracle in the world is man; in whose very body (how much more in his soul!) are miracles enough (between head and feet) to fill a volume." (Trapp)

v. "If we are marvelously wrought upon even before we are born, what shall we say of the Lord's dealings with us after we quit his secret workshop, and he directs our pathway through the pilgrimage of life? What shall we not say of that new birth which is even more mysterious than the first, and exhibits even more the love and wisdom of the Lord." (Spurgeon)

c. And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth: Here David used the phrase **lowest parts of the**

earth to refer to any mysterious, unseen place. The process of a baby's formation in a mother's womb has always been as unseen and mysterious as that which happens **in the lowest parts of the earth**.

i. **Skillfully wrought:** "Hebrew *embroidered*; exquisitely composed of bones, and muscles, and sinews, and veins, and arteries, and other parts, all framed with such wonderful skill, that even heathens, upon the contemplation of all the parts of man's body, and how excellently they were framed, both for beauty and use, have broken forth into pangs of admiration and adoration of the Creator of man." (Poole)

ii. The work of God in fashioning the body of the individual has made some people wonder about the presence of birth defects, and what that may mean regarding God's work. We should regard such birth defects as injuries to God's original design, and even as a person may be injured out of the womb, so they can be injured while still in the womb and in the process of formation. Such injuries are the result of the fall and the corruption it introduced into the world, yet still the eye of faith can see the hand of God at work in what defects or injuries He would allow in His providence.

iii. **The lowest parts of the earth:** "The mysterious receptacle in which the unborn body takes shape and grows is delicately described as 'secret' and likened to the hidden region of the underworld, where are the dead. The point of comparison is the mystery enwrapping both." (Maclaren)

iv. "Much of the formation of our inner man still proceeds in secret; hence the more of solitude the better for us." (Spurgeon)

d. **Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed:** What David (and others) could not see, God could see perfectly. This is another demonstration of his perfect knowledge and care.

i. The Puritan commentator John Trapp had a strange statement on the phrase **was not hidden**: "Aquinas saith that at the resurrection the bodies of the saints shall be so clear and transparent that all the veins, humours, nerves, and bowels shall be seen, as in a glass. It is sure that they are so to God when first formed in the womb."

e. **In Your book they were all written, the days fashioned for me:** God's perfect knowledge did not only extend to the past, before David was born. It also extended to the future, and God knew David's **days** as if they had been **written in a book**.

i. "The Lord's writing in the book (cf. Psa 51:1; Psa 69:28) refers to God's knowledge and blessing of his child 'all the days' of his life (cf. Eph 2:10). His life was written in the book of life, and each of his days was numbered." (VanGemeren)

B. Our response to the greatness of God.

1. (17-18) *The precious nature of God's thoughts to me.*

How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!

How great is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;

When I awake, I am still with You.

a. **How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God:** David was filled with amazement and adoration by considering how God knew and cared for him. It is **precious** that God should think of us at all; it is beyond

precious that He would think *well* of us and think so *often* of us.

i. **How precious:** "The root meaning of the word rendered 'precious' is weighty. The singer would weigh God's thoughts towards him, and finds that they weigh down his scales." (Maclaren)

ii. "He is not alarmed at the fact that God knows all about him; on the contrary, he is comforted, and even feels himself to be enriched, as with a casket of precious jewels. That God should think upon him is the believer's treasure and pleasure." (Spurgeon)

b.If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand: David used a powerful image to illustrate the idea of how *often* God thinks of us. We imagine standing on a shore and wondering just how many grains of **sand** fill the beach – yet God's thoughts are **more in number**.

i. "Thoughts such as are natural to the Creator, the Preserver, the Redeemer, the Father, the Friend, are evermore flowing from the heart of the Lord. Thoughts of our pardon, renewal, upholding, supplying, educating, perfecting, and a thousand more kinds perpetually well up in the mind of the Most High." (Spurgeon)

ii. "You know that people are very proud if a king has merely looked at them; I have heard of a man who used to boast, all his life, that King George IV. – such a beauty as he was! – once spoke to him. He only said, 'Get out of the road;' but it was a king who said it, so the man felt greatly gratified thereby. But you and I, beloved, can rejoice that God, before whom kings are as grasshoppers, actually thinks of us, and thinks of us often." (Spurgeon)

c. **When I awake, I am still with You:** Day or night, David thought of God because he knew the greatness of God's **thoughts to** him. At the waking of the day, the wonderful presence of God was **still with** him.

i. "He awakes from sleep, and is conscious of glad wonder to find that, like a tender mother by her slumbering child, God has been watching over him, and that all the blessed communion of past days abides as before." (Maclaren)

ii. The thoughts about the greatness of God's love "... are like a dream; but, unlike a dream, God's love is real. When awake the psalmist knows that he still enjoys God's presence." (VanGemeren)

iii. "*When I awake* may therefore have its strongest sense, a glimpse of resurrection." (Kidner)

2. (19-22) *Longing for righteousness and justice.*

Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God!
Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.
For they speak against You wickedly;
Your enemies take *Your name* in vain.
Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.

a. **Oh, that You would slay the wicked:** David abruptly shifted from a spirit of wonder and adoration to intense prayer against **the wicked** and against **bloodthirsty men**. It wasn't primarily because these men opposed David, but because they opposed God: **for they speak against You wickedly**. David's adoration filled him with zeal for God's honor.

i. "The abrupt change in the psalm from reverie to resolve is disturbing, but wholly biblical in its realism."

(Kidner)

ii. "Crimes committed before the face of the Judge are not likely to go unpunished.... God who sees all evil will slay all evil." (Spurgeon)

iii. "A faithful servant hath the same interests, the same friends, the same enemies with his Master, whose cause and honor he is, upon all occasions, in duty bound to support and maintain." (Horne)

b. Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You?

David was undeniably God's partisan. He wanted to be on God's side, and therefore even allowed himself to **hate** those who hated God. In fact, David boasted **I hate them with perfect hatred**, regarding them as **enemies**.

i. David went against a spirit also evident in our day – against the idea that we can love God without hating evil. It is entirely possible for a person to be *too* loving, and it corrupts his claimed love for God.

ii. "A good man hates, as God himself doth: he hates not the persons of men, but their sins; not what God made them, but what they have made themselves." (Horne)

iii. "We are neither to hate the men, on account of the vices they practice; nor to love the vices, for the sake of the men who practice them." (Horne)

3. (23-24) A humble prayer to a great God.

**Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if *there is any* wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.**

a. **Search me, O God, and know my heart:** David came to the God of perfect knowledge and constant

presence knowing He was also a God of love, and could be trusted to

search him and to **know** him at the deepest levels. This is also an admission that God knew David better than David knew himself, and that he needed God to **search** and **know** him.

i. David took his theological understanding of God's nature and attributes and applied it to his own personal discipleship. The nature and attributes of God were not mere theories; they were guides to David's spiritual growth.

ii. David knew that *he* could not know his heart at its depths, so he asked God to know it. "The ultimate word of Greek philosophy, 'Man, know thyself,' was really valuable because it brought man face to face with the impossible." (Morgan)

iii. "Very beautifully does the lowly prayer for searching and guidance follow the psalmist's burst of fire. It is easier to glow with indignation against evildoers than to keep oneself from doing evil. Many secret sins may hide under a cloak of zeal for the Lord." (Maclaren)

iv. "The rejection of evil arises from the psalmist's spirit of commitment to the Lord and not from pride. This is clear from his prayer, asking for God to discern his motives and his actions." (VanGemeran)

v. "I call upon you to be cautious in using this prayer. It is easy to mock God, by asking him to search you whilst you have made but little effort to search yourselves, and perhaps still less to act upon the result of the scrutiny." (Melvill, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **Try me, and know my anxieties:** David wanted God to examine him and look for *worry*. Such **anxieties**

could be evidence of unbelief or misplaced trust.

c. **See if there is any wicked way in me:** David opened his soul completely before God, asking if there were any unknown or unperceived sins. This showed how much he *cared* for holiness in his life, and how *humble* he was in recognizing that there could be an unperceived **wicked way** in himself.

i. When prayed sincerely, this is something of a dangerous prayer – worthy, yet dangerous. “It is a serious thing to pray, because it invites painful exposures and surgery, if we truly mean it. Still it is what every wise believer should desire.” (Boice)

ii. “The [King James Version] says ‘wicked way’; but the [Revised Version] margin gives ‘way of grief.’ We may be in a way that causes God grief, even though it is not what men might term a way of wickedness.” (Meyer)

d. **Lead me in the way everlasting:** David ended this majestic psalm by declaring his destination – **the way everlasting**. Trusting the God of complete knowledge and constant presence would bring David to **everlasting** life. The way of holiness prayed for in the previous lines was the **way everlasting**.

i. “We have been going in ways of grief. We desire to go in the way everlasting – the way of eternal life; the way which we shall never need to retrace; the way that touches the deepest life possible to the creature.” (Meyer)

ii. “The final words could be translated ‘the ancient way’ as in Jer 6:16 (cf. Revised Standard Version mg., New English Bible); but the majority of translators would appear to be right in rendering

them *the way everlasting*, in contrast to the way of the wicked which will perish." (Kidner)

Deliver Me, O Lord, from Evil Men

Psa 140:1 Save me, LORD, from evildoers; keep me safe from violent people.

Psa 140:2 They are always plotting evil, always stirring up quarrels.

Psa 140:3 Their tongues are like deadly snakes; their words are like a cobra's poison.

Psa 140:4 Protect me, LORD, from the power of the wicked; keep me safe from violent people who plot my downfall.

Psa 140:5 The proud have set a trap for me; they have laid their snares, and along the path they have set traps to catch me.

Psa 140:6 I say to the LORD, "You are my God." Hear my cry for help, LORD!

Psa 140:7 My Sovereign LORD, my strong defender, you have protected me in battle.

Psa 140:8 LORD, don't give the wicked what they want; don't let their plots succeed.

Psa 140:9 Don't let my enemies be victorious; make their threats against me fall back on them.

Psa 140:10 May red-hot coals fall on them; may they be thrown into a pit and never get out.

Psa 140:11 May those who accuse others falsely not succeed; may evil overtake violent people and destroy them.

Psa 140:12 LORD, I know that you defend the cause of the poor and the rights of the needy.

Psa 140:13 The righteous will praise you indeed; they will live in your presence.

Psalms 140:1-13

Psalms 140 – The Cry and Confidence of a Slandered Soul

*This psalm is titled **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David**. The theme is similar to many of David's other psalms, in which he cried out to God in a time of trouble. This trouble seems to be slander against him, perhaps when he was a fugitive escaping from Saul's court.*

The Chief Musician is thought by some to be the LORD God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1Ch 6:33; 1Ch 16:4-7; 1Ch 25:6). Charles Spurgeon remarked, "The writer wished this experimental hymn to be under the care of the chief master of song, that it might neither be left unsung, nor chanted in a slovenly manner."

A. Evil men, their evil words, the evil plots.

1. (1-3) Praying for deliverance.

**Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men;
Preserve me from violent men,
Who plan evil things in their hearts;
They continually gather together for war.
They sharpen their tongues like a serpent;
The poison of asps is under their lips. Selah**

a. **Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men:** Many times in David's life, he suffered under the presence and pressure of **evil** and **violent men**. This desperate song came from such a time, and shows its urgency by having no prelude of praise or contemplation. David went straight to his plea.

i. "The singer was being slandered by evil and violent men, who were prepared if occasion offered to add

actual violence to their lying speech.” (Morgan)

ii. “Slander and calumny must always precede and accompany persecution, because malice itself cannot excite people against a good man, as such; to do this, he must first be represented as a bad man.” (Horne)

iii. “The persecuted man turns to God in prayer; he could not do a wiser thing. Who can meet the evil man and defeat him save Jehovah himself, whose infinite goodness is more than a match for all the evil in the universe?” (Spurgeon)

b. Who plan evil things in their hearts: Those **evil men** were known by the **evil things in their hearts**. Their evil actions were not accidents disconnected from their true nature, as shown in that they were always ready for conflict and **war**.

i. **Evil things in their hearts:** “It is an awful thing to have such a heart-disease as this. When the imagination gloats over doing harm to others, it is a sure sign that the entire nature is far gone in wickedness.” (Spurgeon)

ii. **They continually gather together for war:** John Trapp noted that the Hebrew is “...they gather wars, as serpents gather poison to vomit out at others.” (Trapp)

c. They sharpen their tongues like a serpent: The desire for **war** and **evil things** is often expressed in sharp and poisonous words. David felt both the sting and the poison of such men and their words.

i. “*Like a serpent*; either whetting their tongues, as serpents are said to whet theirs when they are about to bite; or rather, using words as sharp and piercing as the sting of a serpent.” (Poole)

ii. "It was a common notion that serpents inserted their poison by their tongues, and the poets used the idea as a poetical expression, although it is certain that the serpent wounds by his fangs and not by his tongue. We are not to suppose that all authors who used such language were mistaken in their natural history any more than a writer can be charged with ignorance of astronomy because he speaks of the sun's travelling from east to west." (Spurgeon)

iii. **Asps**: "The word rendered '*adder*' [**asps**], *achsub*, occurs here only; and it is perhaps impossible to determine what species is intended. As the word, in its proper signification, seems to express coiling, or bending back – an act common to most serpents." (Kitto, cited in Spurgeon)

iv. Paul quoted verse 3 in Rom 3:13 as part of his description of man's deep sinfulness. In principle, Paul expanded the idea beyond David's original sense and applied the concept to *all* humanity in its fallen condition.

d. **Selah**: This word indicates some kind of pause, either for a musical expression or for careful thought and meditation – or both. **Selah** is repeated three times in this psalm, and here indicates that the deep sinfulness of man is worthy of our careful consideration. We often think too little of God's greatness *and* too little of man's sinfulness.

i. "What emerges clearly from this passage is the evil that can arise, not from any pressure of circumstances but from a love of violence, cruelty and intrigue for their own sake." (Kidner)

ii. "We meet with *Selah* here for the first time since Psalms 89. From Psalms 90 to Psalms 140 no *Selah* occurs. Why omitted in these fifty we cannot tell any

more than why so often recurring in others. However, there are only about forty psalms in all in which it is used." (Bonar, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (4-5) *Praying for preservation.*

**Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
Preserve me from violent men,
Who have purposed to make my steps stumble.
The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords;
They have spread a net by the wayside;
They have set traps for me. Selah**

a. **Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked:**
In the first portion of this psalm, David acknowledged the presence of **wicked** and **violent men**. With such a realistic view, he then requested of God, "**Preserve me from violent men.**"

i. "Thus David was hunted as a rebel, Christ was crucified as a blasphemer, and the primitive Christians were tortured as guilty of incest and murder." (Horne)

ii. "The 'wicked' may arrogantly desire, plan, and execute; but the Master of the universe cannot tolerate anarchy for long. To this end the plea changes into an imprecatory prayer." (VanGemeren)

b. **The proud have hidden a snare for me:** They hoped to make David trip over a series of hidden snares, **cords**, nets, and **traps**, many of which were expressed in their poisonous words (verse 3). David was not blind to the traps, but he had hope in God's help.

i. "They hunted David as they would a dangerous wild beast: one while striving to *pierce* him with the spear; another to *entangle* him in their snares, so as to take and sacrifice him before the people, on pretense of his being an *enemy to the state*." (Clarke)

ii. "David's enemies wished to snare him in his path of service, the usual way of his life. Saul laid many snares for David, but the Lord preserved him." (Spurgeon)

iii. "How are 'the snares, the nets'...placed for us by that cunning and experienced artist, who takes care that nothing should appear in view, but the alluring baits of honour, pleasure, and profit, while of the toils we have no notice, till we find ourselves entangled and caught in them!" (Horne)

iv. "If a godly man can be cajoled, or bribed, or cowed, or made angry, the wicked will make the attempt. Ready are they to twist his words, misread his intentions, and misdirect his efforts; ready to fawn, and lie, and make themselves mean to the last degree so that they may accomplish their abominable purpose." (Spurgeon)

c. **Selah**: When David considered the *danger* coming from those who opposed him, it prompted a thoughtful pause.

B. Seeking God's help.

1. (6-8) *Praying to the God of strength and salvation.*

**I said to the LORD: "You are my God;
Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
You have covered my head in the day of battle.
Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
Do not further his *wicked* scheme,
Lest they be exalted. Selah**

a. **You are my God**: David would worship no other god; his allegiance was to Yahweh alone. This devotion gave him confidence that God would **hear the voice of his supplications**. God doesn't just hear the words of the

cry, but the **voice** of the cry. It is distinctive and meaningful to Him.

i. "'Thou art my God,' in opposition to the gods of the heathen. They may worship Baal and Asherah, but 'thou art my God.' I count other gods to be idols, the works of men's hands, and I despise them." (Spurgeon)

b. **O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation:** David cried out to Yahweh (**GOD**) his Master (**Lord, adonai**), recognizing *Him* as the Lord of his life, and no other god. The true God could actually help David, being **the strength of his salvation**.

i. "To himself, and to all others, his escape has been marvelous. How could it be accounted for, except that an unseen shield had been around him, covering his head in the day of battle." (Meyer)

c. **You have covered my head in the day of battle:** David knew many literal battles, but he also lived through many battles with lying and slanderous men. David testified that God had been his protection, his shield, his armor in those battles. According to Meyer (cited in Spurgeon), **day of battle** is better translated, "day of armor."

i. "That is to say, *God had been David's Armour-bearer*. The Lord had borne a shield before him; instead of the harness in which warriors put their confidence, God had covered David with a coat of mail [armor] through which no sword of the enemy could possibly cut its way." (Spurgeon)

d. **Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked:** In recognizing the supremacy of Yahweh, David realized that if God were to help the **wicked**, then they would **be**

exalted. He prayed for God to work for His people and against **the desires of the wicked.**

e. **Selah:** When David considered the need for the wicked to be stopped in their evil plotting, it prompted a thoughtful pause.

2. (9-11) *David's prayer regarding the wicked.*

**"As for the head of those who surround me,
Let the evil of their lips cover them;
Let burning coals fall upon them;
Let them be cast into the fire,
Into deep pits, that they rise not up again.
Let not a slanderer be established in the earth;
Let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow him. "**

a. **As for the head of those who surround me:** Since we don't know the exact occasion in David's life for this prayer, we don't know who he meant by **the head**. It could have been Saul, who was David's long and persistent enemy. It could have been Doeg, who was an evil, violent man who bore a false report against David (1 Samuel 21-22).

i. If this prayer is about Saul, it is another significant example of how David would not violently strike against Saul even when he had the opportunity (1Sa 24:1-7, 1Sa 26:7-11). David would not touch Saul; for all his sins and faults, Saul was God's anointed king. When David was attacked by Saul, he would pour out his heart in prayer to the LORD, entrusting Saul's punishment to God in heaven, rather than taking it in his own hands.

b. **Let the evil of their lips cover them:** David prayed for simple justice in regard to his enemies. He prayed they would be covered with the same **evil** they had spoken against others. Under the New Covenant, we are

told not to return evil for evil (Rom 12:17), but we sympathize with David's cry for justice.

i. "Their lips, which uttered mischief against others, shall be the means of covering themselves with confusion, when out of their own mouths they shall be judged. Those tongues, which have contributed to set the world on fire, shall be tormented with the hot burning coals of eternal vengeance." (Horne)

c. **Let burning coals fall upon them:** David prayed that the same fire that wicked men poured out on others would be poured out on them. He prayed that this would destroy the wicked, and that they would be hunted by evil until they were overthrown.

i. "The *burning coals* and *pits* are probably metaphorical, the former for the searing words which they have loved to use...the latter for the traps and pitfalls they have made for others." (Kidner)

ii. "The Psalmist doubtless had before his mind's eye the picture of Sodom, where burning coals fell on the guilty cities, and where men stumbled into the fire, and when they tried to escape, fell into the deep slime pits, and perished." (Spurgeon)

d. **Let evil hunt the violent man:** These evil men hunted David (verses 4-6). David prayed that the same would be returned to them – that the hunters would be hunted by their very **evil**.

i. "God's judgments against sinners are feathered from themselves, as a fowl shot with an arrow feathered from her own body." (Trapp)

ii. "Evil speakers and false accusers shall gain no lasting establishment, but punishment shall hunt sin through all its doubles, and seize it at last as its legal prey." (Horne)

3. (12-13) Confidence in God's victory.

**I know that the LORD will maintain
The cause of the afflicted,
And justice for the poor.
Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name;
The upright shall dwell in Your presence.**

a. **I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted:** David remained confident that God would defend His **afflicted** people. This would mean **justice for the poor** and others who suffer from the words and works of wicked men.

i. VanGemeran remarked that the verb form of **I know** is "...expressive of a present condition...a victory cry."

ii. "**I know**, both by God's word, which hath promised it, and by my own experience of it in the course of God's providence." (Poole)

iii. "The final movement (vv. Psa 140:11-13) is an affirmation of faith. The singer is confident that in the government of Jehovah evil men cannot continue. The afflicted will be delivered, and the righteous and upright will be perfectly vindicated." (Morgan)

iv. "That unjust and oppressive men shall, in the end, suffer proportionably...we are assured from this consideration, namely, that the Almighty is the patron of the injured and oppressed." (Horne)

v. "Many talk as if the poor had no rights worth noticing, but they will sooner or later find out their mistake when the judge of all the earth begins to plead with them." (Spurgeon)

vi. "Every person who is *persecuted* for righteousness' sake has God for his *peculiar help* and *refuge*; and

the *persecutor* has the same God for his *especial enemy*." (Clarke)

b. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name: This psalm ends on a note of confidence. Though assaulted by the wicked, David put his trust in the Lord, and gave all his desire for retribution unto Him. David believed that in the end, **the righteous** would be thankful and **the upright** would **dwell in Your presence** – the best reward of all.

i. "At the time of the intervention and vindication, 'the righteous'...will alter their prayers for deliverance...to songs of triumph." (VanGemeren)

ii. "The last line is wholly positive. His heart is free to find its true home, and his last words match the climax to which the whole of Scripture moves: 'His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face' (Rev 22:3 f.)." (Kidner)

iii. G. Campbell Morgan noted that Psalms 140 begins in great trouble and sorrow, but ends in praise and triumph. "If sorrow is a certainty, so also is the action of Jehovah.... Sorrow and darkness come to all men, but only those who know God and are sure of Him, make suffering, and the night, occasions of triumphant psalmody."

Give Ear to My Voice

Psa 141:1 I call to you, LORD; help me now! Listen to me when I call to you.

Psa 141:2 Receive my prayer as incense, my uplifted hands as an evening sacrifice.

Psa 141:3 LORD, place a guard at my mouth, a sentry at the door of my lips.

Psa 141:4 Keep me from wanting to do wrong and from joining evil people in their wickedness. May I never take

part in their feasts.

Psa 141:5 Good people may punish me and rebuke me in kindness, but I will never accept honor from evil people, because I am always praying against their evil deeds.

Psa 141:6 When their rulers are thrown down from rocky cliffs, the people will admit that my words were true.

Psa 141:7 Like wood that is split and chopped into bits, so their bones are scattered at the edge of the grave.

Psa 141:8 But I keep trusting in you, my Sovereign LORD. I seek your protection; don't let me die!

Psa 141:9 Protect me from the traps they have set for me, from the snares of those evildoers.

Psa 141:10 May the wicked fall into their own traps while I go by unharmed.

Psalms 141:1-10

Psalms 141 – No Compromise

*This psalm has the title **A Psalm of David**. It shows David as a man of tender conscience, who asked God to deal with his own sin and weakness before addressing the wicked men who fought against him. It shows that David was even more concerned about evil inside himself than he was about evil from others.*

"The colourful Hebrew of the middle verses is difficult, but the thrust of the psalm is plain: a prayer against insincerity and compromise, and a plea for survival under the savage attacks which such an attitude has invited." (Derek Kidner)

According to John Trapp, the great preacher of the early church John Chrysostom said this psalm was used in his era (A.D. 349-407) as part of the evening liturgy in the Greek Church, due to the reference in verse 2 to the evening sacrifice.

A. The nature of David's prayer.

1. (1-2) *A prayer like incense.*

LORD, I cry out to You;

Make haste to me!

Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You.

Let my prayer be set before You as incense,

The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

a. **LORD, I cry out to You; make haste to me:**

David's need was urgent, so he directed his prayer to the true God (Yahweh, the **LORD**) and begged him to help with **haste**.

i. "I have cried unto thee, I still cry to thee, and I always mean to cry to thee. To whom else could I go? What else can I do? Others trust to themselves, but I cry unto thee." (Spurgeon)

b. **Give ear to my voice:** When a child cries out to a parent, the parent hears not only the words but the **voice** of the cry. The LORD can hear the **voice** of His people when they **cry out** to Him, and it moves Him to action.

c. **Let my prayer be set before You as incense:** David used the smoke and smell of **incense** as a representation of his **prayer** to God. His posture of prayer (**the lifting up of my hands**) was a gift to God even as **the evening sacrifice** was a gift to God. Rev 5:8 says that the prayers of God's people are like incense, and Heb 13:15 describes praise as a sacrifice unto God.

- Prayer rises to heaven even as the smoke of incense rises upward.
- Prayer pleases God even as incense has a pleasing smell.
- Prayer needs some "fire" to be effective (Jas 5:16 speaks of "...the effective, fervent prayer"), and incense

is activated with fire.

i. If David wrote this psalm while a fugitive from King Saul, then the ideas of **incense** and the **evening sacrifice** held special meaning, because he was not free to publically go to the tabernacle and share in these acts of worship. When necessity kept him from the tabernacle, prayer would replace the offering of incense and sacrifice.

ii. "Incense was offered every morning and evening before the Lord, on the golden altar, before the veil of the sanctuary. Exo 29:39, and Num 28:4." (Clarke)

iii. **Incense** connected with the tabernacle and temple rituals needed to be pure and it needed to be prepared. David intended to offer pure and prepared prayers unto God.

iv. "The raising up of one's hands was symbolic of dependence on and praise of the Lord." (VanGemeren)

2. (3-4) A prayer to be kept from evil.

**Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips.
Do not incline my heart to any evil thing,
To practice wicked works
With men who work iniquity;
And do not let me eat of their delicacies.**

a. **Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth:** David didn't want the same mouth that prayed as if it were incense to be used for lies or any **evil thing**. He asked God to **keep watch over the door of my lips**, so that he would not say evil or foolish things.

i. **Keep watch over the door of my lips:** "That it move not creaking, and complaining, as on rusty

hinges, for want of the oil of joy and gladness.” (Trapp)

ii. “If the house of God needed its guards and doorkeepers, how much more the man of God!” (Kidner)

iii. “Nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out which may any way tend to the dishonour of God, or the hurt of others.” (Henry, cited in Spurgeon)

b. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing: David knew that it was more than his lips that needed protection; his **heart** could also be affected by some **evil thing**, resulting in **wicked works**. This was David’s way of praying what Jesus later taught, *do not lead us into temptation* (Mat 6:13).

i. “The way the heart inclines the life soon tends: evil things desired bring forth wicked things practised. Unless the fountain of life is kept pure the streams of life will soon be polluted.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “The psalmist is not suffering from the hostility of the workers of iniquity, but dreads becoming infected with their sin.” (Maclaren)

iii. “David is not too good for evil people; he is too much like them and therefore likely to be swept away by their wickedness if in their company.” (Boice)

c. Do not let me eat of their delicacies: David didn’t want to walk in the ways of **men who work iniquity**, so he didn’t want to eat at their table either. This may have been a literal situation for David, but the principle of not enjoying all the luxuries that the wicked partake of is always relevant to God’s people.

i. **Men who work iniquity:** "The word 'men'...denotes men of land, rank, and status within the community. However, these members of the aristocracy were nevertheless 'evildoers' who practiced 'wicked deeds' (cf. Psa 28:3).... Removal of oneself from their influence and from the enjoyment of their material benefits was the second step away from temptation; dependency on the Lord was the first." (VanGemeren)

ii. Sometimes there are many advantages in an evil, wicked way. The godly man or woman knows to avoid such advantages. "My afflictions are more desirable than such prosperity." (Poole)

iii. "Instead of slander and violence, they are seeking to seduce him from his loyalty to truth and uprightness, The reference to 'their dainties' [**delicacies**] would seem to suggest that they were endeavouring to show him the advantages which he would enjoy if he would throw in his lot with theirs." (Morgan)

iv. "A Christian living among the unbelievers and sensualists in the world, hath abundant reason to put up the same prayers, and to use the same precautions." (Horne)

3. (5) *A prayer to be corrected by the righteous.*

Let the righteous strike me;

It shall be a kindness.

And let him rebuke me;

It shall be as excellent oil;

Let my head not refuse it.

a. **Let the righteous strike me:** David rejected the *delicacies* of the wicked, but embraced the correction

that came from **the righteous**. He recognized that it would be **a kindness** (*hesed*) to him.

i. "In case I do offend in word or deed, let me never [lack] a faithful reprover, who may smite me as with a hammer (so the word signifieth), reprove me sharply." (Trapp)

ii. "When the ungodly smile upon us their flattery is cruel; when the righteous smite us their faithfulness is kind." (Spurgeon)

iii. "Depend upon it, the man who will tell you your faults is your best friend. It may not be a pleasant thing for him to do it, and he knows that he is running the risk of losing your friendship; but he is a true and sincere friend, therefore thank him for his reproof, and learn how you may improve by what he tells you." (Spurgeon)

b. **It shall be as excellent oil**: The **rebuke** of a good man could be as healing and helpful to David as **excellent oil** upon his **head**. Like a kind anointing from a friend, he would not **refuse** such rebuke or correction – even if it were as severe as a **strike** upon him.

i. **Excellent oil**: "[In] Hebrew a head oil, such as they poured on their friends' heads; and that was of the best." (Trapp)

ii. You may want a fresh anointing, yet miss it because it comes to you as correction from a righteous man or woman. "The fresh anointing which you seek in the morning may come not in rapt emotional experiences, but in the straight dealing of some fellow-disciple. Whenever anything is said which finds fault with you and blames you, receive it humbly and tenderly, asking whether it may not contain a message from your Father." (Meyer)

B. A prayer for preservation against the wicked.

1. (5b-7) The wicked and their work.

**For still my prayer *is* against the deeds of the wicked.
Their judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff,
And they hear my words, for they are sweet.
Our bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave,
As when one plows and breaks up the earth.**

a. **Still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked:** The previous lines described David as grateful for correction from the righteous. Still, he prayed for God's work **against the deeds of the wicked**. For example, he wanted to see wicked **judges** be **overthrown by the sides of the cliff** – a severe but fitting judgment for those who improperly take sides, ignoring David's righteous **words** (as he prayed for in verses 3-4).

i. This section of the psalm is a great challenge for the translator and the interpreter. Alexander Maclaren wrote of the phrase, **still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked**: "But what is the meaning and bearing of the last clause of Psa 141:5? No wholly satisfactory answer has been given."

ii. The meaning of **their judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff** is difficult to understand from the original Hebrew. George Horne said of verse 6, "Of this verse, as it stands in our translation, I know not what can be made." Perhaps David meant King Saul, his chief enemy, yet would not name him out of a desire to avoid attacking God's chosen king.

iii. "The psalmist prays that they may die a cruel death, being thrown down the cliffs (cf. 2Ch 25:12; Luk 4:29). The shock of God's judgment on their

despotic regime will affect their followers and may bring them to their senses." (VanGemeren)

iv. **They hear my words, for they are sweet:** "And so they did: the death of Saul made all the best of the nation look to the son of Jesse as the Lord's anointed; his words became sweet to them." (Spurgeon)

b. **Our bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave:** This is another phrase difficult to understand from the original. Perhaps David used this word picture to describe how ruined he felt he and his righteous companions were at the

deeds of the wicked. Those so ruined could only cry out to God for help.

i. "Our case is almost as hopeless as of those who are dead, and whose bones are scattered in several places." (Poole)

ii. "The point of the figure lies in the resemblance of the bones strewn at the mouth of Sheol to broken clods turned up by a plough. Sheol seems here to waver between the meanings of the unseen world of souls and the grave." (Maclaren)

iii. "To the Jews such a spectacle must have been very dreadful, as the want of burial was esteemed one of the greatest calamities which could befall them." (Burder, cited in Spurgeon)

2. (8-10) A prayer to find safety in the LORD.

**But my eyes are upon You, O GOD the Lord;
In You I take refuge;
Do not leave my soul destitute.
Keep me from the snares they have laid for me,
And from the traps of the workers of iniquity.
Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
While I escape safely.**

a. **But my eyes are upon You:** Even in such a terrible condition (described in the previous lines), David deliberately set his **eyes** upon the Lord. Because God Himself was his **refuge**, David prayed **do not leave my soul destitute**. Without God's protection, he was at the mercy of his wicked enemies.

i. **But my eyes are upon You:** "In all times, in all places, on all occasions, I will cleave unto the Lord, and put my whole confidence in him." (Clarke)

ii. "That he is able to say, 'Mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord,' is a revelation of the fact that his anchor still holds, not only against the fierce onslaught of enemies, but also against the insidious temptation to turn aside from the path of rectitude in order to escape the vindictive opposition of his enemies." (Morgan)

iii. Remember what David said to Saul in 1Sa 26:19 : *If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if it is the children of men, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, "Go, serve other gods."* This shows that David knew that many others lied about him to Saul, hoping to slay him with their slander. It also shows that when David was a fugitive, his enemies hoped to entice him to idolatry saying, *Go, serve other gods*. David would not; in the LORD alone he took **refuge**.

b. **Keep me from the snares they have laid for me:** The enemies of David were determined to destroy him, and so they set many **snares**, **traps**, and **nets** for him. David's prayer was that they would **fall into their own nets**, even as he would **escape safely**. David's trust in

God was repeatedly vindicated as those who sought to destroy him were themselves destroyed.

i. **Keep me from the snares:** "It is hard to keep out of snares which you cannot see, and to escape [snares] which you cannot discover. Well might the much-hunted Psalmist cry, 'Keep me.'" (Spurgeon)

ii. **While I escape safely:** "The last line ('while, as for me – I pass right on!') has a buoyancy worthy of the man who has slipped through many a net with the help of God, and is sure that his journey is by no means over." (Kidner)

iii. "What is uppermost in the psalmist's mind is, in any case, not the destruction of his enemies, but their being made powerless to prevent his "passing by" their snares uncaptured." (Maclaren)

iv. This prayer was answered. "From the sequel of the history we find that the hope and assurance here expressed by the Psalmist were not vain. He escaped all the snares that were laid for him on every side." (Horne)

You Are My Refuge

Psa 142:1 I call to the LORD for help; I plead with him.

Psa 142:2 I bring him all my complaints; I tell him all my troubles.

Psa 142:3 When I am ready to give up, he knows what I should do. In the path where I walk, my enemies have hidden a trap for me.

Psa 142:4 When I look beside me, I see that there is no one to help me, no one to protect me. No one cares for me.

Psa 142:5 LORD, I cry to you for help; you, LORD, are my protector; you are all I want in this life.

Psa 142:6 Listen to my cry for help, for I am sunk in despair. Save me from my enemies; they are too strong for me.

Psa 142:7 Set me free from my distress; then in the assembly of your people I will praise you because of your goodness to me.

Psalms 142:1-7

Psalms 142 – My Only Refuge

*Psalms 142 is titled **A Contemplation of David. A Prayer when he was in the cave.***

*The Hebrew word for **Contemplation** (maskil) could be better translated as instruction. "He calls this prayer Maschil, 'a Psalm of instruction,' because of the good lessons he had himself learned in the cave, learned on his knees, and so learned that he desired to teach others." (Matthew Henry, cited in Charles Spurgeon)*

*The **cave** was probably Adullam cave, mentioned in 1Sa 22:1, though the caves of En Gedi (1Sa 24:1) are also a possibility. Adullam seems to be the best fit, which would suggest that Psalms 34, 57 are also associated with this period of David's life.*

"There are two notes running side by side throughout the song. The first is that of this terrible sense of helplessness and hopelessness so far as man is concerned. The other is that of the determined application of the helpless soul to Jehovah." (G. Campbell Morgan)

A. The preface to David's prayer.

1. (1) David's cry to the LORD.

**I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.**

a. **I cry out to the LORD:** This was more than David's appeal for help. It was also his declaration of allegiance to Yahweh, the God of Israel. David knew about the pagan gods worshipped by the surrounding Gentiles, but he determined that he would never **cry out** to them – only to the LORD.

i. "Trouble and lack of human sympathy or help have done their best work on him, since they have driven him to God's breast. He has cried in vain to man; and now he has gathered himself up in a firm resolve to cast himself upon God." (Maclaren)

ii. "Caves make good closets for prayer; their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion. Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his later days." (Spurgeon)

b. **With my voice; with my voice to the LORD:** As a man of deep spiritual experience, David knew that there were many ways to **cry out to the LORD** – in thought, in feeling, in action. Here David cried out to God with his **voice**, feeling that silent feelings were not enough for his present need.

i. "David, like Bartimaeus in the Gospels, knows the value of refusing to relapse into silence. That way lies despair." (Kidner)

ii. "The state of David in the cave of Adullam was a state of utter destitution. Persecuted by his own countrymen, dismissed by Achish, and not yet joined by his own relations, or any other attendants, he took refuge in the cave, and was there alone." (Horne)

2. (2) *David's complaint to the LORD.*

**I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare before Him my trouble.**

a. **I pour out my complaint before Him:** David had a **complaint** to bring before God. As this psalm develops, David asks for God's help in the face of enemies who hoped to trap him, so this **complaint** is likely against his enemies. Whatever the source, David did the right thing with his **complaint**; he brought it before the LORD.

i. "*My complaint* is not as petulant a word as in English, but might be rendered 'my troubled thoughts'." (Kidner)

ii. "The outpouring of complaint is not meant to tell Jehovah what He does not know. It is for the complainer's relief, not for God's information." (Maclaren)

iii. **I pour out:** "Those words teach us that in prayer we should not try to keep anything back from God, but should show him all that is in our hearts, and that in his presence in our closet, with the door shut, but not before men." (Neale and Littledale, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **I declare before Him my trouble:** David had the heart later expressed by the Apostle Paul in Php 4:6 : *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*

i. "David had no provisions, no followers, and no place to turn.... David then went to Gath, the Philistine city, but this proved to be both dangerous and unworkable, and David eventually escaped into the wilderness again and hid in the cave of Adullam." (Boice)

ii. "it is not merely words that you have to utter, you have to lay all your trouble before God. As a child tells its mother its griefs, tell the Lord all your griefs, your complaints, your miseries, your fears. Tell them all out, and great relief will come to your spirit."
(Spurgeon)

B. David's prayer.

1. (3-4) *God's care for the lonely saint.*

**When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
Then You knew my path.
In the way in which I walk
They have secretly set a snare for me.
Look on *my* right hand and see,
For *there is* no one who acknowledges me;
Refuge has failed me;
No one cares for my soul.**

a. **When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path:** Any time David felt **overwhelmed**, he found confidence in knowing that God **knew** his journey and his walk. God knows our **path** and our **walk** in all of its good and all of its bad.

i. **Overwhelmed:** "David was a hero, and yet his spirit sank: he could smite a giant down, but he could not keep himself up. He did not know his own path, nor feel able to bear his own burden." (Spurgeon)

ii. **You knew my path:** "Then it is an infinite solace to look up into the face of the Father, and say: Before I was born, or took the first steps on this path, or essayed to meet its manifold vicissitudes, Thou knewest it; and Thou must have known that it was not too hard, and that there were resources of strength in Thyself sufficient for my day, which the

emergency would bring out in a clearer manifestation." (Meyer)

b. **They have secretly set a snare for me:** David didn't know where the snares were, but he knew they were out there. David also knew that as He depended upon Him, God could preserve him from secret snares.

i. "The use of concealed traps is disgraceful to our enemies, but they care little to what tricks they resort for their evil purposes. Wicked men must find some exercise for their malice, and therefore when they dare not openly assail they will privately ensnare." (Spurgeon)

c. **There is no one who acknowledges me...no one cares for my soul:** David felt alone and forsaken, yet this very cry to God declares that David knew that even if he were forsaken by men, God had not forsaken him. Even if every other **refuge has failed**, David found in God an ear for the voice of his cry.

i. **Look on my right hand and see:** "The 'right hand' is the place for a champion or helper, but this lonely sufferer's is unguarded, and there is none who knows him, in the sense of recognising him as one to be helped." (Maclaren)

ii. "The 'right' signifies the place where one's witness or legal council stood (cf. Psa 16:8; Psa 109:31; Psa 110:5; Psa 121:5). He has no one to defend him against the adversaries." (VanGemeren)

iii. "We have companions in joy; sorrow we have to face by ourselves. Unless we have Jesus with us in the darkness, we have no one." (Maclaren)

iv. "In the event, it seems that God answered abundantly, soon sending David's 'brothers and all his father's house' to join him in his cave, and then by

degrees a company that would become the nucleus of his kingdom (1Sa 22:1 f.). This low ebb in his fortunes proved in fact to be a turning point." (Kidner)

v. **No one cares for my soul:** "When danger besetteth us around, and fear is on every side, let us follow the example of David, and that of a greater than David, who, when Jews and Gentiles conspired against him, and he was left all alone, in the garden, and on the cross, gave himself unto prayer." (Horne)

2. (5) *David's trust in God alone.*

I cried out to You, O LORD:

I said, "You are my refuge,

My portion in the land of the living.

a. **You are my refuge:** Among men, David had no refuge (verse 4). Yet as he **cried out to** God, David could confidently proclaim that God was indeed his **refuge**. The cities of refuge were, in the Old Testament times, for the protection of an Israelite in special circumstances; and David found his place of **refuge** not in a place or in a particular circumstance, but in the LORD Himself.

i. **I said:** "If David had not *cried* he would not have *said*; and if the Lord had not been his *refuge* he would never have been his *portion*. The lower step is as needful as the higher." (Spurgeon)

b. **My portion in the land of the living:** Many times in David's seasons as a fugitive, he had reason to believe that all his inheritance in this world was gone. In such times he had the confidence that God Himself was his **portion**, his inheritance. David also knew that he would benefit from this **portion in the land of the living**, in the here and now, not only in the age to come.

- i. **My portion:** “To say ‘*my portion*’ goes as far beyond this as love goes beyond fear. [The Good News Bible] brings out the great force of this word by the phrase ‘you are all I want’.” (Kidner)

3. (6-7) *David’s prayer for deliverance.*

**Attend to my cry,
For I am brought very low;
Deliver me from my persecutors,
For they are stronger than I.
Bring my soul out of prison,
That I may praise Your name;
The righteous shall surround me,
For You shall deal bountifully with me.”**

a. **Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low:** David once again brought his **cry** to the LORD, honestly confessing his **low** circumstances. David didn’t feel a need to pretend that everything was fine or that he wasn’t weak; he could come to God for help even when **brought very low** by **persecutors** who were **stronger** than him.

- i. “The song ends with an earnest cry for deliverance, and an affirmation of confidence that the cry will be heard and answered.” (Morgan)

b. **They are stronger than I:** This means that David well understood his present weakness. The one who killed Goliath felt himself to be very weak – and actually, that was a good place for David to be. God’s strength would soon flood his life.

- i. “You always hear about Jacob’s wrestling. Well, I dare say he did; but it was not Jacob who was the principal wrestler.... The wrestling was to take all his strength out of him; and when his strength was gone, then God called him a prince. Now, David was to be

king over all Israel. What was the way to Jerusalem for David? What was the way to the throne? Well, it was round by the cave of Adullam.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Bring my soul out of prison:** This was likely a figure of speech, yet David felt constrained and bound in his **soul**. He longed to be free from this sense, so that he could **praise** God’s **name**.

i. “‘My soul’ is frequently a longer way of saying ‘me’.” (Kidner)

ii. “‘Prison’ may denote actual imprisonment but may also be a metaphor for his desperate condition in the light of the allusions to adversity and isolation (cf. Psa 107:10; Isa 42:7).” (VanGemeren)

d. **That I may praise Your name:** Though his cry came from a great sense of humility and weakness, David ended this psalm with great confidence.

- David began the song with *complaint* (verse 2); he closes confident of **praise** to come.

- David began the song with a great sense of isolation (verse 4); he closes with confidence in coming companionship and support from the **righteous**.

- David began with the sense of being low and weak (verse 6); he closes confident in God’s future goodness, knowing that God would **deal bountifully** with him.

i. “This prayer of David was heard and answered; he was delivered from his persecutors, enlarged from his distress, exalted to the throne, and joined by all the tribes of Israel.” (Horne)

ii. “In spite of all the opposition of men he realized that his God would deal bountifully with him,

therefore instead of his foes, he would find himself surrounded by the righteous." (Morgan)

iii. **The righteous shall surround me:** "[In] Hebrew, shall crown me; that is, shall encircle me, as wondering at thy goodness in my deliverance; or they shall set the crown on mine head." (Trapp)

iv. "Perhaps when he wrote the song he already began to realize that the crowd of men in debt, in danger, and discontented, who were coming to him, would presently bring him into his kingdom." (Morgan)

My Soul Thirsts for You

Psa 143:1 LORD, hear my prayer! In your righteousness listen to my plea; answer me in your faithfulness!

Psa 143:2 Don't put me, your servant, on trial; no one is innocent in your sight.

Psa 143:3 My enemies have hunted me down and completely defeated me. They have put me in a dark prison, and I am like those who died long ago.

Psa 143:4 So I am ready to give up; I am in deep despair.

Psa 143:5 I remember the days gone by; I think about all that you have done, I bring to mind all your deeds.

Psa 143:6 I lift up my hands to you in prayer; like dry ground my soul is thirsty for you.

Psa 143:7 Answer me now, LORD! I have lost all hope. Don't hide yourself from me, or I will be among those who go down to the world of the dead.

Psa 143:8 Remind me each morning of your constant love, for I put my trust in you. My prayers go up to you; show me the way I should go.

Psa 143:9 I go to you for protection, LORD; rescue me from my enemies.

Psa 143:10 You are my God; teach me to do your will. Be good to me, and guide me on a safe path.

Psa 143:11 Rescue me, LORD, as you have promised; in your goodness save me from my troubles!

Psa 143:12 Because of your love for me, kill my enemies and destroy all my oppressors, for I am your servant.

Psalms 143:1-12

Psalms 143 – Hope for the Persecuted Soul

*The title of this psalm is simply **A Psalm of David**. It is another cry to God from a time of crisis and affliction because of David's many enemies. It is numbered among the seven Penitential Psalms – songs of confession and humility before God. It was a custom in the early church to sing these psalms on Ash Wednesday, the Wednesday six weeks before Easter. Psalms 143 does not seem to belong to this group as much as the others do (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, , 130), but 143:2 is a strong and clear statement about the unrighteousness of mankind.*

A. Pleading for God's help in a time of crisis.

1. (1-2) Pleading for God to hear.

**Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.**

a. **Hear my prayer, O LORD:** This psalm describes David in another crisis. Because his life was filled with so much activity and danger, it is impossible to link this psalm to any one particular point of crisis. It could be from the time before David was recognized as king, living as a fugitive from King Saul, or it could be from David's

time as king, particularly when his son Absalom led a rebellion against him.

i. In this crisis, David knew that he must cry out to God and that God must **hear** him, or he would be lost. For David, prayer was not merely a self-improvement exercise that was good for him whether God heard him or not; prayer was a real plea made to a real God who could be appealed unto to **hear**, to answer, and to help.

b. **Give ear to my supplications:** This is the same idea as **hear my prayer** in the previous line. David used the familiar Hebrew poetic form of parallelism, repeating the same idea in different words for the purpose of emphasis.

c. **In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness:** David appealed to the **faithfulness** and **righteousness** of God in his request. He asked God to act consistently with those attributes and to **answer** David.

i. David knew something of the character and nature of God, and this shaped his prayer life. He could never ask God to be unfaithful or unrighteous. Yet he could ask God to act according to His character, and David did boldly make his request on that basis.

ii. **In Your righteousness:** "Even the sterner attributes of God are upon the side of the man who humbly trusts, and turns his trust into prayer." (Spurgeon)

d. **Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous:** David understood that if God were to deal with *him* only on the basis of His righteousness, it could mean **judgment** and ruin for David. So he asked God to deal with him on the

basis of mercy (**do not enter into judgment**) and understood that he appealed to God because the LORD is righteous, not because David was **righteous**.

i. We may consider David's thoughts as such: "LORD, I know that You are righteous and I am not. Yet I come to You as **Your servant**, asking You to act on my behalf because of Your mercy and Your righteousness, not on my supposed righteousness."

ii. In saying **in Your sight no one living is righteous**, David seemed to anticipate the Apostle Paul in Rom 3:10 (quoting Isaiah), *There is none righteous, no not one*; and Rom 3:23, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*. "Luther called this psalm one of the 'Pauline Psalms' (see also 32; 51; 130)." (VanGemeran)

iii. When David said this, he wasn't thinking of *others*, as in "LORD, they – the whole world – are unrighteous." Instead he thought about *himself*, as in "LORD, **no one living is righteous**, and I am certainly numbered among them."

iv. "How contrary is this spirit to the confession of innocence in several psalms (7:3-5)! Both expressions are valid, depending on the context in which one finds himself. The confession of innocence is appropriate when one is insulted and persecuted for righteousness's sake, and the confession of guilt is proper when confronted with one's own frailties." (VanGemeran)

v. "His peril has forced home the penitent conviction of his sin, and therefore he must first have matters set right between him and God by Divine forgiveness." (Maclaren)

2. (3-4) *The nature of the crisis.*

**For the enemy has persecuted my soul;
He has crushed my life to the ground;
He has made me dwell in darkness,
Like those who have long been dead.
Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me;
My heart within me is distressed.**

a. **For the enemy has persecuted my soul:** In his wide and amazing life, David knew suffering of many kinds. Here he spoke of the persecution and suffering of his **soul**. Perhaps there was also a physical or material aspect to his misery, but that is not in view. David ached and cried out to God out of **soul**-misery.

b. **He has crushed my life to the ground:** David went on to describe his sense of soul-misery.

- His life felt **crushed...to the ground**.
- He felt that he lived **in darkness** as would be true of those **long...dead**.
- He felt his **spirit** to be **overwhelmed within** himself.
- He felt his **heart** to be **distressed**.

i. Collectively, this is a powerful picture of the deep misery of a soul. Worse for David, he felt this was *pressed upon him* by his **enemy**. This wasn't because David was of a melancholy or depressive nature; such misery is of its own character. This was something brought upon David by his adversary.

ii. This makes us think of the times when others caused great misery for David, misery that surely extended to the depths of his soul. For many years he lived as a fugitive from King Saul, having to forsake all because a wicked man persecuted him without cause. David also experienced deep misery when his son Absalom rebelled and deposed him as king. David

knew what it was like to have great soul-misery inflicted upon him by another person.

iii. **Dwell in darkness:** “Literally, *in dark places*. This may be understood of David’s taking refuge in *caves* and *dens* of the earth.” (Clarke)

c. **Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is distressed:** David spoke long before the greater Son of David, but these words could also be in the mouth of Jesus, especially in His Gethsemane agony. In Gethsemane, before His betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus said: *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death* (Mat 26:38).

- i. "Such words our Lord Jesus might have used: in this the Head is like the members, and the members are as the Head." (Spurgeon)

3. (5-6) The workings of the soul.

**I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all Your works;
I muse on the work of Your hands.
I spread out my hands to You;
My soul *longs* for You like a thirsty land. Selah**

a. **I remember the days of old:** In this dark season of his soul, David considered the days of old when things were not so bad. He probably thought of early days of innocence and freshness in his life and his life with God.

i. There were probably mixed emotions within David as he remembered the **days of old**. If he thought of the joy, the simplicity, and the goodness of how God met him and blessed him as an anonymous (even somewhat despised) shepherd boy, it would bring a warm smile to his face. Yet it would also cause him some pain to consider how far away all that seemed in his present misery of soul.

ii. There are times when it is good for us to **remember the days of old**. We can remember the sweet and good times of our early life with God, and it blesses us. We can also remember **the days of old** before our own time, thinking of the great things God has done among His people in days past. Even if remembering **the days of old** fills us with a measure of sadness to think of how distant those better days may seem, we can use those memories to restore our hope.

iii. "When we see nothing new which can cheer us, let us think upon old things. We once had merry days,

days of deliverance, and joy and thanksgiving; why not again?" (Spurgeon)

b. **I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands:** David's consideration of **the days of old** was not only a nostalgic longing for the past. It was a remembrance of God's great **works**. David didn't remember *his* past as much as he remembered *the LORD's* past works.

i. For David, what made the past worth remembering was the work of the LORD. He thought *carefully* about what God had done; **meditate** and **muse** are words that speak of *deep thought*.

c. **I spread out my hands to You:** Thinking deeply about what God did with His hands made David respond with *his hands*, spreading them out before God in prayer and praise. David praised God for what He had done in **the days of old**, and he prayed that God might draw close to him now.

i. This posture of prayer and praise was genuine hope for David in the midst of his misery of soul. "*I stretch forth my hands unto thee,*" as if I were in hope thou wouldst take me by the hand and draw me to thee." (Baker, cited in Spurgeon)

d. **My soul longs for You like a thirsty land:** Thankfully, the ache in David's soul did not drive him away from God. It drove David to God in prayer, praise, and deep longing. His persecuted soul (Psalms 3) sought after God with the intensity of thirst.

i. "While we recite this verse, let us not be unmindful of Him whose hands were often stretched forth in prayer for his people, and whose soul thirsted after our salvation, even then, when he felt extremity of bodily thirst on the cross." (Horne)

B. The plea presented again

1. (7) *The need for a quick answer.*

Answer me speedily, O LORD;

My spirit fails!

Do not hide Your face from me,

Lest I be like those who go down into the pit.

a. **Answer me speedily:** David felt that his failing **spirit** could not last long without God's **answer** and intervention. Many a saint has felt as David did, feeling an *urgency* to hear God's answer.

i. Experience had taught David that God always did things at just the right time, but the present crisis made him cry out, "**Answer me speedily, O LORD.**"

b. **Do not hide Your face from me:** David knew what it was like to enjoy the sense of God's favor and blessing. To feel that God might

hide His face drove David into despair, so he pleaded to see the light of God's countenance.

i. Much later, the Apostle Paul wrote: *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Rom 8:31). When we live with the belief that God is for us, we are confident in the face of any adversary. Yet if we sense that God may **hide** His **face from** us, we feel weak before any adversary.

ii. Sadly, David's words do not connect with the daily experience of many who think of themselves as followers of God. The spiritually insensitive man cares little about God's favor and blessing. He lives only occasionally aware of a break in communion with God. David was not such a man.

c. **Lest I be like those who go down into the pit:** David considered this to be the worst imaginable fate: to

leave the land of the living and go to the pit of the grave. He felt that he could not go on without a continued sense of the favor and blessing of God.

2. (8) *The need for loving guidance.*

**Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For in You do I trust;**

**Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.**

a. **Cause me to hear:** David needed to hear a good word from God, and asked that he would be **caused** to hear it. Perhaps David wondered if God was speaking and he somehow failed to hear, so he prayed, “**Cause me to hear.**” This is a good prayer for all to pray.

i. “He who made the ear will cause us to hear, he who is love itself will have the kindness to bring his lovingkindness before our minds.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Your lovingkindness in the morning:** David needed to hear something of God’s great mercy, His **lovingkindness** – His *hesed*. He needed to hear this early in the day, **in the morning**, so we would have assurance and know how to walk during the day.

i. The ancient Hebrew word here translated **lovingkindness** is *hesed*. For centuries it was translated with words like *mercy*, *kindness*, and *love*. In 1927, a scholar named Nelson Glueck (among others) argued that the real idea behind *hesed* was “covenant loyalty” and not so much love or mercy. However, many disagreed and there is no good reason for changing the long-held understanding of *hesed* and taking it as a word that mainly emphasizes covenant loyalty (see R. Laird Harris on *hesed* in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*).

ii. Spurgeon on **lovingkindness** (*hesed*):
“Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but lovingkindness is doubly dear; it is the cream of kindness.”

iii. “He is beginning to look ahead and seek direction. The phrase, *in the morning*, is already a token of this by its admission that the night is not endless.” (Kidner)

c. **Cause me to know the way in which I should walk**: David confessed that he didn’t **know the way**, and that he needed God to **cause** him to **know the way**. He didn’t only need the love of God – he also needed the guidance of God. **Cause me to know the way in which I should walk** is a wonderful prayer for all to pray.

d. **For in You do I trust...for I lift up my soul to You**: David appealed to God on the basis of his trust and surrender to God. It was as if David prayed, “LORD, I am genuinely depending on you. Please don’t let me down; speak to me and guide me.”

i. “If the soul will not rise of itself we must lift it, lift it up unto God.” (Spurgeon)

3. (9) *The need for deliverance from wicked men.*

**Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies;
In You I take shelter.**

a. **Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies**: David’s enemies had persecuted his soul (verse 3). He prayed not only for God’s encouragement, but also for His defense against these **enemies**.

b. **In You I take shelter**: This was a beautiful statement of faith. David would not take **shelter** in sinful pleasures, in the distractions of entertainment, in

positive thinking, in self-reliance, in bitterness, or in vengeance. David was determined to **take shelter** in the LORD.

- i. "The blessedness of contrite trust is that it nestles the closer to God, the more it feels its unworthiness. The child hides its face on the mother's bosom when it has done wrong." (Maclaren)

4. (10) *The need to do God's good will.*

**Teach me to do Your will,
For You are my God;
Your Spirit is good.
Lead me in the land of uprightness.**

- a. **Teach me to do Your will:** David could say, "*Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness*" and "*Cause me to know the way in which I should walk*" (verse 8). Yet he did not say, "*Cause me to do Your will.*" In all his reliance upon God, he knew that God would not obey *for him*. Rather, the loving God would **teach** David to do His will. He would **lead** David **in the land of uprightness**.

- i. "The psalmist does not say, 'Lord, help me to talk about thy will,' though it is a very proper thing to talk about, and a very profitable thing to hear about. But still doing is better than talking." (Spurgeon)

- ii. Spurgeon also described *how* the believer should **do** the **will** of God: thoughtfully, immediately, cheerfully, constantly, universally, spiritually, and intensely.

- iii. The next line, **Your Spirit is good**, connects this teaching work of God with the presence of His **Spirit**. "Moreover the Lord has a way of teaching us by his own Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks in secret whispers to those who are able to hear him. It is not every professing Christian that has the visitations of the

Spirit of God in personal monitions, but there are saints who hear a voice behind them saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' God guides us with his eye as well as by his word." (Spurgeon)

b. **For You are my God**: It was appropriate for David to expect **God** to teach him. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will teach the willing servant to do His will, a demonstration of the goodness of God's **Spirit**.

i. We should know what David knew – that **Your Spirit is good**. We should know it even more than David did, in light of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that is part of the New Covenant. A believer has no reason to fail to yield to the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

ii. John Trapp noted this from Cyril of Alexandria (A.D. 378-444): "Cyril gathereth from this text, that the good Spirit is God, because none is good but God."

5. (11-12) *The need for revival and rescue.*

Revive me, O LORD, for Your name's sake!

For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

In Your mercy cut off my enemies,

And destroy all those who afflict my soul;

For I am Your servant.

a. **Revive me, O LORD**: David prayed for *revival*, for a renewal of life and vitality. Yet he prayed this not for his own benefit or reputation, but **for Your name's sake** – the sake of the LORD's name and reputation.

i. A genuine concern for the sake of God's name is a necessary aspect of true revival – and not for the name or the advancement of any man or woman of God. Many prayers for revival are actually self-

interested, praying “Lord, let *me* be known for a great work of revival.”

b. **For Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble:** David knew that his rescue would bring glory to God, so he could pray for deliverance on that basis. He could ask God to **destroy all those who afflict my soul**, leaving vengeance to God against those who persecuted his soul.

i. **Bring my soul out of trouble:** “I can bring it in, but thou only canst bring it out.” (Trapp)

c. **In Your mercy cut off my enemies...for I am Your servant:** David appealed to God on the basis of His name, His righteousness, and His **mercy** – yet also on the basis of his relationship with God as His **servant**. David understood that the servant has obligations to the Master; yet, the Master also has obligations to the **servant**.

i. “For God is pledged to His servant as surely as His servant is pledged to Him.” (Kidner)

ii. David asked God to deal with his enemies; but before that, he asked God to deal with *him*. He knew that his own low or uninspired or undirected walk with God was a greater danger than any enemy.

My Rock and My Fortress

Psa 144:1 Praise the LORD, my protector! He trains me for battle and prepares me for war.

Psa 144:2 He is my protector and defender, my shelter and savior, in whom I trust for safety. He subdues the nations under me.

Psa 144:3 LORD, what are mortals, that you notice them; mere mortals, that you pay attention to us?

Psa 144:4 We are like a puff of wind; our days are like a passing shadow.

Psa 144:5 O LORD, tear the sky open and come down; touch the mountains, and they will pour out smoke.

Psa 144:6 Send flashes of lightning and scatter your enemies; shoot your arrows and send them running.

Psa 144:7 Reach down from above, pull me out of the deep water, and rescue me; save me from the power of foreigners,

Psa 144:8 who never tell the truth and lie even under oath.

Psa 144:9 I will sing you a new song, O God; I will play the harp and sing to you.

Psa 144:10 You give victory to kings and rescue your servant David.

Psa 144:11 Save me from my cruel enemies; rescue me from the power of foreigners, who never tell the truth and lie even under oath.

Psa 144:12 May our sons in their youth be like plants that grow up strong. May our daughters be like stately columns which adorn the corners of a palace.

Psa 144:13 May our barns be filled with crops of every kind. May the sheep in our fields bear young by the tens of thousands.

Psa 144:14 May our cattle reproduce plentifully without miscarriage or loss. May there be no cries of distress in our streets.

Psa 144:15 Happy is the nation of whom this is true; happy are the people whose God is the LORD!

Psalms 144:1-15

Psalms 144 – War and Peace

*This psalm has the title **A Psalm of David**. It is believed to have been written near the time David came to be recognized as the king over all the tribes of Israel, and the psalm expresses David's heart for the nation in both war and peace.*

"It appears from verse 2 and verse 10 of this psalm, that it was composed after David's accession to the throne. And it is evident, from verse 5, etc. that he had more enemies still to conquer, such as the Philistines, etc." (George Horne)

A. Prayer and worship regarding seasons of war.

1. (1-2) Praising God who blessed and helped David in battle.

**Blessed be the LORD my Rock,
Who trains my hands for war,
And my fingers for battle—
My lovingkindness and my fortress,
My high tower and my deliverer,
My shield and *the One* in whom I take refuge,
Who subdues my people under me.**

a. **Blessed be the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war:** David was a remarkable warrior, who in today's terms would be an elite special forces soldier. David killed many men in hand-to-hand combat, as described in 1Sa 17:48-50; 1Sa 18:26-27. Training is an essential part of success as a soldier, and David understood that it was the **LORD** who had trained his **hands for war** and his **fingers for battle**.

i. In his youth, David's **hands** and **fingers** were familiar with "...the [shepherd's] hook and [musician's] harp, and not to the sword and spear; but God hath apted and abled them to feats of arms, and warlike exploits." (Trapp)

ii. Adam Clarke listed the weapons he thought David intended: "...to use the *sword, battle-axe, or spear...*to use the *bow and arrows, and the sling.*"

iii. **Who trains my hands for war:** If a man or woman feels that God is training him or her to use spiritual weapons – such as the sword of the Spirit, the word of God – then training must always continue. It is never "who trained my hands for war," but always in the present: **who trains my hands for war.**

iv. Spurgeon wrote of the danger of using some weapons without adequate training – a danger in both the natural and spiritual realms: "Untrained force is often an injury to the man who possesses it, and it even becomes a danger to those who are round about him; and therefore the psalmist blesses the Lord as much for teaching as for strength."

b. **My lovingkindness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer:** David poured out names and titles for God, each representing some aspect of God's character or help that had been of use in battle. David knew God's help and presence in many ways, not just one or two.

i. Of all the names and titles, we note that David began with **my lovingkindness** (*hesed*, the great word for God's loyal and covenant love). He loved and valued God for being his **fortress**, his **high tower**, his **deliverer**, his **shield**, his **refuge**, and his conquering victory. Yet first among all those was the gift from God of love, mercy, and faithfulness.

ii. "In Psalms 144 David is extremely personal as he confesses who he had found God to be. He says 'my Rock,' 'my loving God,' 'my fortress,' 'my stronghold,' 'my deliverer,' and 'my shield'." (Boice)

c. **Who subdues my people under me:** David likely wrote this after he was received as king over all the tribes of Israel (2Sa 5:1-5). If this psalm comes from an earlier period, he may have meant the subduing of the *mighty men* under his authority (as in 1Sa 22:1-2).

i. "Men who rule others should thank God if they succeed in the task. Such strange creatures are human beings, that if a number of them are kept in peaceful association under the leadership of any one of the Lord's servants, he is bound to bless God every day for the wonderful fact." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-4) *The unexpected love and care of God for humanity.*

LORD, what *is* man, that You take knowledge of him?

Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?

Man is like a breath;

His days *are* like a passing shadow.

a. **LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?** In the previous lines David exalted God's great strength and victory. In light of that, it amazed David that God would have an interest in him, or in humanity in general.

i. Psa 8:4 asks the same questions from a slightly different perspective. Here the emphasis is on the LORD as a warrior that none can oppose. In Psa 8:4 the emphasis is on the power of God as Creator and sustainer of the universe.

ii. "The Lord thinks much of man, and in connection with redeeming love makes a great figure of him: this can be believed, but it cannot be explained." (Spurgeon)

b. **Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?**

David used the common method of repetition to bring

emphasis to the concept of God's unusual and even unexpected care for humanity.

i. "Though I am king over my people, yet, alas, I am but a man. a base, sinful, mortal, and miserable creature; if compared with thee, less than nothing and vanity." (Poole)

c. **Man is like a breath:** Having been responsible for the death of so many men, and having been so near to death himself, David knew how temporary human life was. It was as fleeting as a **breath** or a **passing shadow**.

i. "The psalmist does not present his petition before the Lord timidly but with boldness. He knows his God; and despite human shortcomings, he is convinced that the Lord does 'care for him' and 'think of him.'" (VanGemeren)

3. (5-8) *A plea for rescue from the great God.*

**Bow down Your heavens, O LORD, and come down;
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
Flash forth lightning and scatter them;
Shoot out Your arrows and destroy them.
Stretch out Your hand from above;
Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters,
From the hand of foreigners,
Whose mouth speaks lying words,
And whose right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.**

a. **Bow down Your heavens, O LORD, and come down:** David used phrases and images from God's appearance on Mount Sinai (Exo 19:16-20) to give the sense of awe and even terror connected with God's presence.

i. "He wants God to be as present in his day as he was when he revealed himself at Sinai." (Boice)

ii. "In like manner, the church, or mystical body of Christ, is instant in prayer for the final completion of all her hope. She wisheth for the glorious day, when her God and Saviour shall bow the heavens, and come down to judgment, causing the mountains to smoke, and flame, and dissolve, and flow down before him; when his lightnings, those arrows of his indignation, and ministers of his vengeance, shall scatter the host of darkness, and destroy the anti-christian powers; when we shall be delivered from every enemy, and from all that hate us." (Horne)

b. **Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters:** David asked that the same God of majestic awe would fight for him, sending forth **lightning** like **arrows** against the **foreigners** who fought against David with lies and **falsehood**.

i. During David's days as a fugitive from Saul, he had many men who informed against him so they might gain favor with King Saul (1Sa 22:6-10; 1Sa 23:19-20). David also likely faced whisperers and liars against his character when he was king. Like the greater Son of David, he was often lied about and slandered.

ii. When David spoke against these **foreigners**, it was not because of their nationality. By their actions they proved that they were truly **foreigners** from the people of God and rejected Yahweh, the God of Israel.

iii. "Those against whom he pleaded were out of covenant with God; they were Philistines and Edomites; or else they were men of his own nation of black heart and traitorous spirit, who were real strangers, though they bore the name of Israel!" (Spurgeon)

B. Praise and prayer to God for the blessing of peace.

1. (9-10) *Praise to the God who rescues.*

**I will sing a new song to You, O God;
On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You,
The One who gives salvation to kings,
Who delivers David His servant
From the deadly sword.**

a. **I will sing a new song to You, O God:** New victories and new deliverance required a **new song**. God's love and help for David were always fresh and new, so his praise would also be.

i. **I will sing a new song:** "Upon the receipt of any new mercy, like as in a lottery, at every new prize drawn the trumpet soundeth." (Trapp)

b. **On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You:** David was a skilled musician (1Sa 16:18), and he played his **harp of ten strings** as he sang praises to God.

c. **The One who gives salvation to kings:** David had felt God's help many times as a humble shepherd boy (1Sa 17:34-36) and as a despised fugitive (1Sa 23:24-29). We sense that David was almost surprised that God would *also* help him as king, rescuing him **from the deadly sword**.

2. (11-15) *Praying that the enemy be defeated so that God's people would prosper.*

**Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of
foreigners,
Whose mouth speaks lying words,
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood—
That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their
youth;
That our daughters *may be* as pillars,
Sculptured in palace style;**

***That our barns may be full,
Supplying all kinds of produce;
That our sheep may bring forth thousands
And ten thousands in our fields;
That our oxen may be well laden;
That there be no breaking in or going out;
That there be no outcry in our streets.
Happy are the people who are in such a state;
Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!***

a. **Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners:** David here repeated the idea from earlier in the psalm (verses 7-8). The presence and destructive work of these foreign liars and false speakers were of great concern to him, and he pleaded with God to **rescue** him.

b. **That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth:** David prayed for a series of blessings that would come among God's people when God dealt with the evil speakers in their midst. The list of blessings focuses on the concerns of everyday people in farming societies:

- Blessed with children in the home; well-rooted and flourishing **sons**, and stable and stately **daughters**.
- Blessed in the work of their hands, with **barns** full, **ten thousands** of **sheep**, and **oxen** burdened with heavy harvests.
- Blessed with safety and peace in the community, with no violence (**breaking in or going out**) or riot over injustice (**outcry in our streets**).

i. "The Lord had promised to bless his people with stalwart youth, productivity, and prosperity, and to protect them from enemy attacks and humiliation (cf. Lev 26:1-13; Deu 28:1-14; Psa 132:13-18)."
(VanGemeren)

ii. **Daughters may be as pillars:** "...the daughters as the very picture of statuesque elegance and strength, 'like sculptured pillars at the corners of a palace' (New English Bible). There has been nothing slipshod in their upbringing." (Kidner)

iii. "We desire a blessing for our whole family, daughters as well as sons. For the girls to be left out of the circle of blessing would be unhappy indeed." (Spurgeon)

iv. **No breaking in or going out:** "So well ordered is the *police* of the kingdom, that there are no depredations, no robbers, house-breakers, or marauding parties, in the land; no sudden incursions of neighbouring tribes or banditti breaking into fields or houses, carrying away property, and taking with them the people to sell them into captivity: there is no such *breaking in*, and no such *going out*, in the nation." (Clarke)

c. **Happy are the people who are in such a state:** David prayed as a wise and caring king, asking God for blessing upon his **people** in their common, everyday lives.

i. "This mercy I beg, not only for my own sake, but for the sake of thy people, that thine and our enemies being subdued, and peace established in the land, thy people may enjoy those blessings which thou hast promised to them." (Poole)

ii. "These verses may with a little accommodation be applied to a prosperous church, where the converts are growing and beautiful, the gospel stores abundant, and the spiritual increase most cheering. There ministers and workers are in full vigour, and the people are happy and united. The Lord make it so in all our churches evermore." (Spurgeon)

d. **Happy are the people whose God is the LORD:** Yet such blessings could only come to God's covenant people when they were loyal to God as they had promised to be loyal (Exo 24:3-8). When they looked to Yahweh as their only God and Master, rejecting all the idols of the nations, the promised blessings were granted – and God's people were **happy**.

i. What was true for David and Israel under the Old Covenant is even truer for the believer in Jesus under the New Covenant. It should be said of believers, **Happy are the people whose God is the LORD.** This is our promise and heritage as believers, followers of Jesus Christ.

ii. "Those who worship the happy God become a happy people." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The prayer ends at the source of the harmony it has visualized. For while it treasures the gifts, it reserves its final beatitude for the relationship behind them: that of being the people who know the Lord as their own." (Kidner)

Great Is the Lord

Psa 145:1 I will proclaim your greatness, my God and king; I will thank you forever and ever.

Psa 145:2 Every day I will thank you; I will praise you forever and ever.

Psa 145:3 The LORD is great and is to be highly praised; his greatness is beyond understanding.

Psa 145:4 What you have done will be praised from one generation to the next; they will proclaim your mighty acts.

Psa 145:5 They will speak of your glory and majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful deeds.

Psa 145:6 People will speak of your mighty deeds, and I will proclaim your greatness.

Psa 145:7 They will tell about all your goodness and sing about your kindness.

Psa 145:8 The LORD is loving and merciful, slow to become angry and full of constant love.

Psa 145:9 He is good to everyone and has compassion on all he made.

Psa 145:10 All your creatures, LORD, will praise you, and all your people will give you thanks.

Psa 145:11 They will speak of the glory of your royal power and tell of your might,

Psa 145:12 so that everyone will know your mighty deeds and the glorious majesty of your kingdom.

Psa 145:13 Your rule is eternal, and you are king forever. The LORD is faithful to his promises; he is merciful in all his acts.

Psa 145:14 He helps those who are in trouble; he lifts those who have fallen.

Psa 145:15 All living things look hopefully to you, and you give them food when they need it.

Psa 145:16 You give them enough and satisfy the needs of all.

Psa 145:17 The LORD is righteous in all he does, merciful in all his acts.

Psa 145:18 He is near to those who call to him, who call to him with sincerity.

Psa 145:19 He supplies the needs of those who honor him; he hears their cries and saves them.

Psa 145:20 He protects everyone who loves him, but he will destroy the wicked.

Psa 145:21 I will always praise the LORD; let all his creatures praise his holy name forever.

Psalms 145:1-21

Psalms 145 – Praising God for Who He Is and What He Does

*This psalm is titled **A Praise of David**. Though Psalms 17, 86 were also called A Prayer of David, this is the only one titled **A Praise of David**, and it is a high point of praise. "Psalms 145 is indeed a monumental praise psalm, a fit summary of all David had learned about God during a long lifetime of following hard after the Almighty." (James Montgomery Boice)*

Psalms 145 is the last psalm attributed to David in the collection of psalms, and it is the last of the nine psalms using some kind of acrostic pattern (9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145). Five of these acrostic psalms are attributed to David.

"In Jewish practice this psalm was recited twice in the morning and once in the evening service. The Talmud commends all who repeat it three times a day as having a share in the world to come." (Willem VanGemeren)

A. Learning to praise God.

1. (1-3) Learning from David's example of a heart fully given to praise.

**I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable.**

a. **I will extol You, my God, O King:** To **extol** is to praise, to lift high, to exalt. David honored and promoted the name of God in the most personal of ways:

- He did it with a direct address (**You**).
- He did it with a personal reference (**my God**).

- He did it with a surrendered heart (**O King**).
- He did it unendingly (**forever and ever...every day**).
 - i. "In the opening sentences He is addressed as 'My Elohim, O King,' and afterwards always as Jehovah (nine times)." (Morgan)
 - ii. **O King**: "This is a significant statement from the mouth of Israel's king, for it acknowledges that although David may have been king of the elect nation of Israel, God is nevertheless the King of kings and therefore David's king too." (Boice)
 - iii. **Every day I will bless You**: "To bless God is to praise him with a personal affection for him, and a wishing well to him; this is a growingly easy exercise as we advance in experience and grow in grace." (Spurgeon)
 - iv. "Observe that David is firmly resolved to praise God. My text has four 'I wills' in it. Frequently it is foolish for us poor mortals to say 'I will,' because our will is so feeble and fickle; but when we resolve upon the praise of God, we may say, 'I will,' and 'I will,' and 'I will,' and 'I will.'" (Spurgeon)
- b. **Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised**: David piled praise upon praise, declaring God's greatness and great *worthiness to be praised*. We get the feeling that David felt it would be dishonorable to withhold his praise to God or to give Him half-hearted praise.

2. (4-7) *Passing the praise of God from one generation to another.*

**One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.
I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
And on Your wondrous works.**

**Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts,
And I will declare Your greatness.
They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness,
And shall sing of Your righteousness.**

a. **One generation shall praise Your works to another:** David looked for God's people to encourage each other in praise. An older **generation** might inspire a younger generation to praise by remembering God's **mighty acts** in the past. A young **generation** might stir praise in an older generation by declaring the fresh and new things God was doing.

i. "God's praises are many, and man's life short, and one generation succeedeth another: let them relate God's wonderful works one to another, and so perpetuate his praises to all posterity." (Trapp)

ii. "The generations shall herein unite: together they shall make up an extraordinary history. Each generation shall contribute its chapter, and all the generations together shall compose a volume of matchless character." (Spurgeon)

b. **I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works:** Praise comes not only from emotion, but from careful thought – from careful meditation. David meditated not only on the great things God did (His **wondrous works**), but he also paid attention to God's **glorious splendor**. The idea is of the glory and wonder of who God actually is.

i. "It seems, then, dear friends, that David studied the character and doings of God, and thus praised him; knowledge should lead our song. The more we know of God the more acceptably shall we bless him through Jesus Christ." (Spurgeon)

ii. When we think of the aspects of God's **glorious splendor** – His majesty, His wisdom, His constant presence, His complete knowledge, His unlimited power, His loving and wise plan and purpose – all this should stir up praise within us.

iii. When we think of God's **wondrous works** – His works of planning, His works of creation, His works of providence, His works of rescue, His works of salvation now and in the age to come – all this should stir up praise within us.

iv. "Here are [assorted] words heaped together, to intimate that no words were sufficient to express it." (Poole)

v. **The glorious splendor of Your majesty:** "The flashing brightness with which, when gathered, as it were, in a radiant mass, they shine out, like a great globe of fire." (Maclaren)

c. **Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts, and I will declare Your greatness:** To give emphasis, David repeated the idea of praising God for *who He is* and for *what He has done*. Repeating the idea a third time, we remember the demonstration of God's **great goodness** in what He does, and we declare that He Himself is full of **righteousness** in who He is.

i. "The psalmist enjoins all God's people to share in the extension of God's kingdom by private meditation, discussion, and public speaking about God's mighty acts." (VanGemeren)

ii. **I will declare Your greatness:** "All men are enamoured of greatness. Then they must seek it in God, and get it *from* God. David did both. All history shows the creature aspiring after this glory. Ahasuerus, Astyages, Cyrus, Cambyes,

Nebuchadnezzar, were all called *the great*. Alexander the Great, when he came to the Ganges, ordered his statue to be made of more than life size, that posterity might believe him to have been of nobler stature. In Christ alone does man attain the greatness his heart yearns for – the glory of perfect goodness.” (Le Blanc, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **They shall utter the memory:** “The Hebrew word has something to do with bubbling up: it means they shall overflow, they shall gush with the memory of thy great goodness.” (Spurgeon)

B. Declaring and praising the greatness of God.

1. (8-9) *The memory and present experience of God’s goodness.*

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,

Slow to anger and great in mercy.

The LORD is good to all,

And His tender mercies are over all His works.

a. **The LORD is gracious and full of compassion:**

David echoed the self-description of Yahweh to Moses: *The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth* (Exo 34:6).

i. “But greatness, majesty, splendour, are not the Divinest parts of the Divine nature, as this singer had learned. These are but the fringes of the central glory. Therefore the song rises from greatness to celebrate better things, the moral attributes of Jehovah.” (Maclaren)

b. **The LORD is good to all:** David expressed the idea sometimes called *common grace* – that God spreads some of His goodness to all humanity. Jesus said, *He*

makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Mat 5:45).

i. **Is good to all:** "...not to Israel only, but to all mankind, whose hearts he fills with food and gladness, as it is said, Act 14:17." (Poole)

c. **His tender mercies are over all His works:** David saw the beautiful care of God pressed upon all that He did. All creation and all the wise plan of God were demonstrations of the greatness and goodness of God.

i. "The original word for 'his tender mercies'...signifies the 'womb.' The 'mercies' of God toward men are, therefore, represented by this word, to be like those of a mother towards the child of her 'womb.'" (Horne)

2. (10-13) All creation declares God's praise.

**All Your works shall praise You, O LORD,
And Your saints shall bless You.
They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom,
And talk of Your power,
To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.
Your kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And Your dominion *endures* throughout all
generations.**

a. **All Your works shall praise You, O LORD:** Creation itself praises God, and does so out of grateful duty. Yet even more than the rivers and hills praising God (Psa 98:8), God's people (**Your saints**) should gratefully praise and **bless** the LORD.

b. **They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom:** This is a wonderful subject for the speech of God's people. There are many things we talk about, but all too little do we **speak of the glory** of God's kingdom and of His great **power**.

i. **And talk of Your power:** "The recipients of His grace should be the messengers of His grace."
(Maclaren)

c. **To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom:** David again sensed the responsibility of God's people to tell the wider world the greatness of what God has done (**His mighty acts**) and who our King is (**the glorious majesty of His kingdom**).

i. "As the State cannot teach these holy histories the people of God must take care to do it themselves. The work must be done for every age, for men have short memories in reference to their God, and the doings of his power." (Spurgeon)

ii. "I consider that one of the great lacks of the Church, nowadays, is not so much Christian preaching as Christian talking – not so much Christian prayer in the prayer-meeting, as Christian conversation in the parlor. How little do we hear concerning Christ!" (Spurgeon)

d. **Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom:** One reason why praise should continue forever (as in verse 2) is because God's

kingdom will last forever. His **dominion** is unending, lasting **throughout all generations**.

i. "Men come and go like shadows on the wall, but God reigneth eternally. We distinguish kings as they succeed each other by calling them first and second; but this King is Jehovah, the First and the Last." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom:** "These words are engraven on the door of a mosque in Damascus, which was formerly a Christian church.

Originally they were plastered over by stucco; but this has dropped away, and the words stand out clearly defined. They seem to be contradicted by centuries of Mohammedanism; but they are essentially true.” (Meyer)

iii. Derek Kidner noted that in the acrostic arrangement of this psalm, “One letter of the alphabet (*nun*) is lacking from the standard Hebrew text; but most of the ancient translations and now a text from Qumran (11Q Ps) supply the missing verse, which [the Revised Standard Version] and subsequent translations include at the end of verse 13.”

3. (14-16) The kindness of God to those in need.

**The LORD upholds all who fall,
And raises up all *who are* bowed down.
The eyes of all look expectantly to You,
And You give them their food in due season.
You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.**

a. **The LORD upholds all who fall:** God’s compassion is especially evident toward those who **fall** and fail. He does not despise or reject them; there is a sense in which He specially draws near them to hold them up. If they allow their **fall** to rightly humble them, God will draw near and uphold them.

i. **The LORD upholds all who fall:** “The phrase, *all who are falling*, is unusually expressive; and this timely help at an early stage is coupled with God’s power to revive lost hope and failed abilities: cf. New English Bible, ‘and straightens backs which are bent’.” (Kidner)

ii. “Many are despondent, and cannot lift up their heads in courage, or their hearts with comfort; but

these he cheers. Some are bent with their daily load, and these he strengthens." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The last portion of the psalm is marked by a frequent repetition of 'all,' which occurs eleven times in these verses. The singer seems to delight in the very sound of the word, which suggests to him boundless visions of the wide sweep of God's universal mercy, and of the numberless crowd of dependents who wait on and are satisfied by Him." (Maclaren)

b. They eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season: The humble put their expectation on God, looking to Him for their needs. They pray, *give us this day our daily bread* (Mat 6:11), and God answers their prayer **in due season**.

i. Most commentators connect this with the words **every living thing** that follow, and see that *all* creation is in view. "What a fine figure! The *young* of all animals look up to *their parents for food*. God is here represented as the *universal Father*, providing food for every living creature." (Clarke)

ii. "He condescends to the needs of his creatures... [this shows] the beauty of Yahweh's condescension to the needs of his people." (VanGemeren)

c. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing: God's care for creation extends beyond His provision for men and women. As Jesus would later say, God also cares for the birds and the grass of the field (Mat 6:26-30). God does this with a wonderfully **open** hand and heart to His creation.

i. As we take in David's amazing description of God, we see how different Yahweh (the true and living God) is compared to the idols of the nations. Those supposed gods were often angry and petulant, caring

little for either humanity or creation. We are surprised and grateful for the love and care from the God who is really there.

4. (17-21) *The love and righteousness of the LORD.*

**The LORD is righteous in all His ways,
Gracious in all His works.
The LORD is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He also will hear their cry and save them.
The LORD preserves all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.
My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD,
And all flesh shall bless His holy name
Forever and ever.**

a. **The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works:** Throughout this psalm David has spoken much about how we should praise God for who He is and what He has done. Here again David gives us a reason to praise the LORD, recognizing the incomparable combination of being **righteous** and **gracious**.

i. Later the Apostle Paul would write about this idea, how in the person and work of Jesus, God did *demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26)*. The combination of being both *just* and the *justifier* is much the same as being both **righteous** and **gracious**.

b. **The LORD is near to all who call upon Him:** God's responsiveness to His praying people demonstrates the graciousness mentioned in the previous lines. **He will fulfill the desire** and **hear the cry** of His people.

i. "Since the Lord is so good to his creation, how much more does he care for his covenant people! This is essentially what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 6:25-34).\" (VanGemeren)

ii. **To all who call upon him in truth:** "...because there is a counterfeit and false sort of worshipping, and calling upon God, which is debarred from the benefit of this promise.\" (Dickson, cited in Spurgeon)

iii. **He will fulfill the desires of those who fear Him:** In his commenatary on this line of the psalm, John Trapp noted that Martin Luther prayed to God, \"Let my will be done.\" Trapp added that Luther could pray this because he also said to God, \"Because my will is for Your will to be done, and nothing else.\"

iv. \"They who long for God will always have as much of God as they long for and are capable of receiving.\" (Maclaren)

c. **The LORD preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy:** David gave a further example of God's graciousness in action (preserving **all who love Him**), along with His righteousness in action (**all the wicked He will destroy**).

i. \"*Preserves* may be a little misleading, as though it promised the godly a charmed life. 'Watches over' (New English Bible) is better; see again Luk 21:16-18.\" (Kidner)

d. **My mouth shall...bless His holy name forever and ever:** We sense that David meant this as a declaration. Having written so eloquently about who God is and what He has done for His people, David's firm decision was to use his **mouth** to praise and **bless** God again and again.

i. \"Whatever others may do, I will not be silent in the praise of the Lord, whatever others may speak upon,

my topic is fixed once for all: I will speak the praise of Jehovah. I am doing it, and I will do it as long as I breathe." (Spurgeon)

ii. "So ends David's contribution to the Psalter, on a note of praise which is wholly his own (21a), yet as wide as mankind and as unfading as eternity." (Kidner)

iii. "The last verse of Psalms 145 is the last word we have from David in the Bible. It is his last will and testament. If he had said nothing else in his long life, these words would be a fine legacy for future generations. In it he praises God and invites others to praise God also." (Boice)

Put Not Your Trust in Princes

Psa 146:1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, my soul!

Psa 146:2 I will praise him as long as I live; I will sing to my God all my life.

Psa 146:3 Don't put your trust in human leaders; no human being can save you.

Psa 146:4 When they die, they return to the dust; on that day all their plans come to an end.

Psa 146:5 Happy are those who have the God of Jacob to help them and who depend on the LORD their God,

Psa 146:6 the Creator of heaven, earth, and sea, and all that is in them. He always keeps his promises;

Psa 146:7 he judges in favor of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free

Psa 146:8 and gives sight to the blind. He lifts those who have fallen; he loves his righteous people.

Psa 146:9 He protects the strangers who live in our land; he helps widows and orphans, but takes the wicked to their ruin.

Psa 146:10 The LORD is king forever. Your God, O Zion, will reign for all time. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 146:1-10

Psalms 146 – Praise to the LORD, Worthy of Our Trust

Psalms 146 begins a series of five final songs in the Book of Psalms, and the five are known as the Hallelujah Psalms. "In the earlier psalms, we have studied the writers' griefs, shames, sins, doubts, and fears. We have witnessed the people of God in their defeats and victories, their ups and downs in life. We have encountered rebellious words and struggling faith. All this is behind us now. In these final psalms every word is praise." (James Montgomery Boice)

A. The happiness of trusting in the LORD.

1. (1-2) A declaration of praise to Yahweh.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

a. **Praise the LORD:** The psalmist meant this (*Hallelujah!*) as both a declaration of his own praise to God and as an exhortation to praise. He called upon his own **soul** to give Yahweh praise, and others to give praise as well.

i. "Hallelujah is a compound word made up of two Hebrew words: *hallel* (an imperative verb meaning 'praise') and *jah* (a contraction of the name for God, Jehovah). So hallelujah means 'Praise the Lord (or Jehovah).'" (Boice)

b. **While I live I will praise the LORD:** This is much the same as Psa 104:33, declaring a determination to praise God with one's entire life and **being**.

i. "No sooner is one hallelujah ended, but another begins." (Horne)

ii. **While I have my being:** "...in my continuance, in my progression, my eternal existence. This is very expressive." (Clarke)

iii. "We cannot be too firm in the holy resolve to praise God, for it is the chief end of our living and being that we should glorify God and enjoy him for ever." (Spurgeon)

iv. "*George Carpenter*, the Bavarian martyr, being desired by some godly brethren, that when he was burning in the fire he would give them some sign of his constancy, answered, 'Let this be a sure sign unto you of my faith and perseverance in the truth, that so long as I am able to hold open my mouth, or to whisper, I will never cease to praise God, and to profess his truth'; the which also he did, saith mine author; and so did many other martyrs besides." (Trapp)

2. (3-4) *A caution against confidence in man.*

**Do not put your trust in princes,
Nor in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help.
His spirit departs, he returns to his earth;
In that very day his plans perish.**

a. **Do not put your trust in princes:** Yahweh is to be praised, but man is to be questioned. Even the highest among men – **princes** – are not worthy of our confidence. We are sure to be disappointed when we put our trust **in whom there is no help.**

i. **Do not put your trust in princes:** "...in men of greatest wealth and power, in whose favour men are very prone to trust." (Poole)

ii. "The word *princes* may seem to remove this advice from the plane of ordinary folk and their needs; but a modern equivalent would be 'the influential', whose backing may well seem more solid and practical than God's." (Kidner)

iii. **In whom there is no help:** "However high his state, he is but a 'son of Adam' (the earth born), and inherits the feebleness and fleetingness which deprive him of ability to help. 'He has no salvation' is the literal rendering of the last words of Psa 146:3 b." (Maclaren)

b. **His spirit departs, he returns to his earth:** The greatest among men are only men, and subject to death. Ashes turn to ashes and dust to dust, and even the brilliant plans of man **perish**. These are reasons to set our confidence in God and not in man.

i. **Spirit** could also be understood as *breath*. "High as he stood, the want of a little air brings him down to the ground, and lays him under it." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Verses 3 and 4 make these points by two plays on Hebrew words. In Hebrew *adam*, meaning 'man,' is the same word for 'earth' or 'ground.' So dirt goes to dirt." (Boice)

iii. "Earthly princes, if they have the will, often want the power, even to protect their friends. And should they want neither will nor power to advance them, yet still all depends upon the breath in their nostrils." (Horne)

iv. **His plans perish:** "As soon as ever he is dead, his thoughts perish; all his designs and endeavours, either for himself or for others." (Poole)

v. "This is the narrow estate of man, his breath, his earth, and his thoughts; and this is his threefold

climax therein – his breath goeth forth, to his earth he returns, and his thoughts perish. Is this a being to be relied upon? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. To trust it would be a still greater vanity.” (Spurgeon)

3. (5-7) Happy confidence in a great God.

**Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in the LORD his God,
Who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that is in them;
Who keeps truth forever,
Who executes justice for the oppressed,
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners.**

a. **Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help:** Princes among men often fail, but God never disappoints the one who hopes in Him.

i. The psalmist has abruptly transitioned from negative to positive. “His negative teaching, if it stood alone, would be a gospel of despair, the reduction of life to a torturing cheat; but taken as the prelude to the revelation of One whom it is safe to trust, there is nothing sad in it.” (Maclaren)

ii. “We have here a statement which we have personally tried and proved: resting in the Lord, we know a happiness which is beyond description, beyond comparison, beyond conception.” (Spurgeon)

iii. **Whose hope is in the LORD his God:** “We never praise God better than by exercising faith in him! Quiet trust is among the sweetest music that reaches the heart of God; and when we put our trust in man, we rob God of his glory; we are giving to others the confidence which belongs alone to him.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Who made heaven and earth:** The singer gives us more reasons for confidence in God. When we trust in the LORD as the Creator of all things, we realize He has power to help us and deliver us that even great men do not have.

i. "The psalmist does not introduce anything new in this description of the Lord's mighty acts...but the manner in which he brings the various ways of divine sustenance together is most creative, including the conclusion." (VanGemeren)

c. **Who keeps truth forever:** God can also be trusted because He is a moral, upright God. Yahweh is unchangingly true. He champions **justice for the oppressed**. The God of such creating power would be a tyrant without His abundant passion for **truth** and **justice**.

i. **Who keeps truth forever:** "And this 'for ever' is opposed to that mortality and mutability of earthly princes, Psa 146:4." (Trapp)

ii. "He is true to his own nature, true to the relationships which he has assumed, true to his covenant, true to his Word, true to his Son. He keeps true, and is the keeper of all that is true." (Spurgeon)

d. **Who gives food to the hungry:** God also cares for those who are in need. For the **hungry** He provides **food** and for **prisoners** He provides **freedom**. In all this we see a God of power, holiness, and love. This is a God who can be trusted with confidence.

i. **Food to the hungry:** "The hungry hearts of men, who are all full of needs and longing, may turn to this mighty, faithful, righteous Jehovah, and be sure that He never sends mouths but He sends meat to fill

them. All our various kinds of hunger are doors for God to come into our spirits." (Maclaren)

ii. "Thus he completes the triple blessing: justice, bread, and liberty." (Spurgeon)

B. The helpfulness of the holy God.

1. (8-9) Declaring the power and loving care of God.

The LORD opens *the eyes of the blind*;

The LORD raises those who are bowed down;

The LORD loves the righteous.

The LORD watches over the strangers;

He relieves the fatherless and widow;

But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.

a. **The LORD opens the eyes of the blind:** The psalmist here continues a marvelous description of Yahweh as a God of power, care, justice, and compassion. The psalmist seems delighted to describe Yahweh in His great works of love and power.

i. "All these classes of afflicted persons are meant to be regarded literally, but all may have a wider meaning and be intended to hint at spiritual bondage, blindness, and abjectness." (Maclaren)

ii. We instantly connect this list with the work of Jesus the Messiah.

- Jesus opened **the eyes of the blind** (Mat 9:27-29).

- Jesus raised **those who are bowed down** (Luk 13:11-13).

- Jesus loved **the righteous** (Mat 13:43; Mat 25:46).

- Jesus watched **over the strangers** (Mat 8:5-10).

- Jesus blessed **the fatherless and widow** (Luk 7:12-15).
- Jesus turned **the way of the wicked...upside down** (Mat 21:12).
- The logical conclusion is that Jesus is Yahweh, **the LORD**.

iii. "Like Father, like Son. For us, these lines may bring to mind the oracle of Isaiah 61 by which Jesus announced his mission, and the further clues to his identity which he sent back to John the Baptist (Luk 4:18 f; Luk 7:21 f.).\" (Kidner)

b. But the way of the wicked He turns upside down: God shows great love and compassion to the poor, afflicted, and needy. Yet the Lord also brings justice against **the wicked**, and turns their way **upside down**.

i. **He turns upside down:** "He maketh them to lose their way; he not only frustrateth their plots and enterprises but turneth them against themselves.\" (Poole)

ii. "That aspect of God's government is lightly handled in one clause, as befits the purpose of the psalm. But it could not be left out. A true likeness must have shadows. God were not a God for men to rely on, unless the trend of His reign was to crush evil and thwart the designs of sinners.\" (Maclaren)

2. (10) Praising the God who reigns forever.

**The LORD shall reign forever—
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **The LORD shall reign forever:** The psalmist was happy to declare this, because God's power and might

were expressed with such love and compassion. Through both might and right, **the LORD shall reign forever, even to all generations.**

i. **The LORD shall reign forever:** "Therefore he can never fail; and he is *thy God, O Zion*. Hitherto he has helped *you* and your *fathers*; and has extended that help from *generation to generation*. Therefore trust in him and bless the Lord." (Clarke)

ii. "However humbling the thought may be, and to whatever searching of heart it may drive us, it is certain that if, and when 'Hosannas languish on our tongues, and our devotion dies,' the reason is that we have lost our clear vision of God, our keen consciousness of what He is. To know Him is to praise Him, and that without ceasing." (Morgan)

b. **Praise the LORD:** Psalms 146 ends as it began – with a declaration of praise to Yahweh, the proclamation *Hallelujah!*

i. "Here endeth this gladsome Psalm. Here endeth *not* the praise of the Lord, which shall ascend for ever and ever." (Spurgeon)

He Heals the Brokenhearted

Psa 147:1 Praise the LORD! It is good to sing praise to our God; it is pleasant and right to praise him.

Psa 147:2 The LORD is restoring Jerusalem; he is bringing back the exiles.

Psa 147:3 He heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds.

Psa 147:4 He has decided the number of the stars and calls each one by name.

Psa 147:5 Great and mighty is our Lord; his wisdom cannot be measured.

Psa 147:6 He raises the humble, but crushes the wicked to the ground.

Psa 147:7 Sing hymns of praise to the LORD; play music on the harp to our God.

Psa 147:8 He spreads clouds over the sky; he provides rain for the earth and makes grass grow on the hills.

Psa 147:9 He gives animals their food and feeds the young ravens when they call.

Psa 147:10 His pleasure is not in strong horses, nor his delight in brave soldiers;

Psa 147:11 but he takes pleasure in those who honor him, in those who trust in his constant love.

Psa 147:12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

Psa 147:13 He keeps your gates strong; he blesses your people.

Psa 147:14 He keeps your borders safe and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

Psa 147:15 He gives a command to the earth, and what he says is quickly done.

Psa 147:16 He spreads snow like a blanket and scatters frost like dust.

Psa 147:17 He sends hail like gravel; no one can endure the cold he sends!

Psa 147:18 Then he gives a command, and the ice melts; he sends the wind, and the water flows.

Psa 147:19 He gives his message to his people, his instructions and laws to Israel.

Psa 147:20 He has not done this for other nations; they do not know his laws. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 147:1-20

Psalms 147 – Praising the God of Care and Creation

This is another of the last five psalms that have no title in the Hebrew text, but each of these last five begin and end with Hallelujah or Praise the LORD!

A. Praising God for His protection and preservation.

1. (1) The goodness of hallelujah.

Praise the LORD!

For *it is* good to sing praises to our God;

For *it is* pleasant, *and* praise is beautiful.

a. **Praise the LORD:** These words are both a declaration and an encouragement of praise to Yahweh. We are encouraged to **praise** Yahweh with the psalmist.

i. "There is no heaven, either in this world, or the world to come, for people who do not praise God. If you do not enter into the spirit and worship of heaven, how should the spirit and joy of heaven enter into you?" (Puslford, cited in Spurgeon)

b. **It is good to sing praises to our God:** It was right for the psalmist to tell himself and others to **praise the LORD**, and he assumed that God's people would do it with singing. The goodness of praise comes from the truth that it is, in itself, **pleasant** and **beautiful**.

i. Psa 33:1 says *praise from the upright is beautiful*. True praise is **beautiful** to God, to His people as a community, and to the individual worshipper.

ii. Praise is **pleasant** and **beautiful** for humanity. "It is decent, befitting, and proper that every intelligent creature should acknowledge the Supreme Being: and as he does nothing *but good* to the children of men, so they should *speak good of his name*." (Clarke)

iii. Since **praise is beautiful**, "...an unthankful man is an ugly, ill-favoured spectacle." (Trapp)

2. (2-6) The care and power of God.

**The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.
He heals the brokenhearted
And binds up their wounds.
He counts the number of the stars;
He calls them all by name.
Great *is* our Lord, and mighty in power;
His understanding *is* infinite.
The LORD lifts up the humble;
He casts the wicked down to the ground.**

a. **The LORD builds up Jerusalem, He gathers together the outcasts of Israel:** The psalmist describes the goodness and greatness of God so he and others would have *reasons* to praise God. The first reason is God's active care for **Jerusalem**, perhaps a reference to its restoration after the exile.

i. "The twelfth chapter of Nehemiah tells how the Levites were brought to the city to lead a grand celebration 'with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres' (Neh 12:27)."
(Boice) It would have been fitting for them to sing this psalm, especially verses 2-3.

ii. In a sermon titled *Good Cheer for Outcasts*, Spurgeon considered the many kinds of **outcasts** that Jesus gathers and blesses today.

- Outcasts may be the very poorest and most despised among men.
- Outcasts may be those who have made themselves so by their wickedness.
- Outcasts may be those who judge themselves to be outcasts.
- Outcasts may be backsliders from the church.

- Outcasts may be those who have fallen into great depression of spirit.
- Outcasts may be those who suffer for righteousness' sake.

b. **He heals the brokenhearted:** God not only cares for communities, but also for individuals. Those who hurt – the **brokenhearted** and the wounded – are special objects of His care.

i. "Hearts are broken through disappointment. Hearts are broken through bereavement. Hearts are broken in ten thousand ways, for this is a heart-breaking world; and Christ is good at healing all manner of heartbreaks" (Spurgeon).

ii. Spurgeon described many reasons why Jesus is good at healing **the brokenhearted**.

- Jesus is educated for this work, having His own heart broken.
- Jesus is experienced in this work, having healed broken hearts for 2,000 years.
- Jesus is willing to take the worst patients, and has never yet lost a patient.
- Jesus heals broken hearts with medicine that He himself provides.

iii. "That God tells the number of the stars is only what we should expect of Him.... But that He should be able to bend over one broken heart and bind it with His sympathy and heal its flowing wounds, this is wonderful, amazing, divine." (Meyer)

c. **He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name:** The same God who cares for the lowly individual also knows and names all the **stars**. His

majesty extends in both directions, from the span of the universe to the individual need.

- i. The psalmist allowed us to make the logical conclusion – that if God knows and names all the stars, He certainly knows me and names me.
 - ii. Apparently in the days of Matthew Poole (1624-79), astronomers numbered 1,025 stars. “He telleth the number of the stars, which no man can do, Gen 22:17. For those thousand and twenty-five which astronomers number, are only such as are most distinctly visible to the eye, and most considerable for their influences.” In the 21st century scientists estimate that there are 1 billion trillion stars in the observable universe. God knows the exact number.
 - iii. **He calls them all by name:** “Calling them all by names (lit., He calls names to them all) is not giving them designations, but summoning them as a captain reading the muster roll of his band. It may also imply full knowledge of each individual in their countless hosts.” (Maclaren)
 - iv. “The ‘stars’ are not forces or deities as in the ancient Near East but created entities over which the Lord is sovereign.” (VanGemeren)
- d. **Great is our Lord, and mighty in power:** The psalmist again described God in the highest aspects of His majesty (**His understanding is infinite**) and in the lowest and most compassionate aspects of His majesty (**the LORD lifts up the humble**).
- i. “It turns upside down the familiar argument that in so great a universe our small affairs are too minute to notice.” (Kidner)

ii. **His understanding is infinite:** "There is no fathoming his wisdom, or measuring his knowledge. He is infinite in existence, in power, and in knowledge, as these three phrases plainly teach us." (Spurgeon)

e. **The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground:** This is much like the phrase repeated throughout in the Scriptures – *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (as in Pro 3:34, Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5).

i. "He reverses the evil order of things. The meek are down, and he lifts them up; the wicked are exalted, and he hurls them down to the dust." (Spurgeon)

ii. "As a man ranks himself in one or other of these two divisions, he may expect from heaven storm or sunshine, mercy or judgment." (Horne)

B. Praising God for His work in nature.

1. (7-9) *Exhortation to sing praises.*

**Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praises on the harp to our God,
Who covers the heavens with clouds,
Who prepares rain for the earth,
Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.
He gives to the beast its food,
And to the young ravens that cry.**

a. **Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving:** As we understand God's majesty in both its heavenly and earthly expressions, it should create in us a natural response of praise. We bring our praise with song, with **thanksgiving**, and with music (**on the harp to our God**).

i. **Our God:** "He is 'our God,' whether he be the God of other men or not. He is 'our God' by his choice of us, and by our choice of him; 'our God' by eternal

covenant, to whom we also pledge ourselves.”
(Spurgeon)

b. Who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth: God’s power and loving care come together again in His work in nature. He brings **rain**, He **makes grass to grow**, and **He gives to the beast its food**.

i. **To the young ravens:** “...which he mentions, partly, because they were most contemptible, especially to the Jews, to whom they were unclean and forbidden for food; partly, because they are greedy and voracious; and partly, because they are not only neglected by men, but also forsaken by their [mothers] as soon as ever they can fly, and so are wholly left to the care and keeping of Divine Providence.” (Poole)

ii. “The Lord is sovereign over and concerned with all his creation, not only the magnificent stars, but also the lowly creatures on earth. How different is the God of Israel from Baal, whose [supposed] powers of rain and fertility were nothing in comparison!”
(VanGemeren)

2. (10-11) What delights the LORD.

**He does not delight in the strength of the horse;
He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.
The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
In those who hope in His mercy.**

a. **He does not delight in the strength of a horse:** We take great interest in the power of God’s creation, whether it is **the strength of a horse** or the strength **in the legs of a man**. God created these things, but they are not what fundamentally **delight** Him.

b. The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him: What God takes pleasure in is the reverence and trust of His people. Those who find their **hope in His mercy** delight God, because they honor Him with their trust.

i. **Mercy** here is the word *hesed*, which refers to the great love of God, especially in the context of loyalty to His promises and covenant. It pleases God when we hope in His loyal love, His loving kindness.

ii. **Those who fear Him...those who hope:** "Marks of new birth are fear and hope. They fear, for they are sinners; they hope, for God is merciful. They fear him, for he is great; they hope in him, for he is good. Their fear sobers their hope; their hope brightens their fear: God takes pleasure in them both in their trembling and in their rejoicing." (Spurgeon)

C. Praising God for His wisdom, power, and word.

1. (12-18) More praise for the God of great care and power.

Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

For He has strengthened the bars of your gates;

He has blessed your children within you.

He makes peace *in* your borders,

***And* fills you with the finest wheat.**

He sends out His command *to the* earth;

His word runs very swiftly.

He gives snow like wool;

He scatters the frost like ashes;

He casts out His hail like morsels;

Who can stand before His cold?

He sends out His word and melts them;

He causes His wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.

a. **Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem:** The exhortation to praise comes again, with another *hallelujah*. The more

we understand and explain the power and care of God, the more we should **praise** Him.

b. **He has strengthened the bars of your gates:** This begins a series of four great and compassionate acts God had done for His people. Each of these were a *reason* for praise. Our worship is not empty adoration; it is gratitude for specific goodness and the anticipation of future goodness.

- He gives security (strengthen **the bars of your gates**).
- He gives a future (bless **your children within you**).
- He gives peace (**peace in your borders**).
- He gives provision (**fills you with the finest wheat**).

i. **He has strengthened the bars of your gates:** "The fortifications of Jerusalem are now complete, and their strength gives security to the people gathered into the city. Over all the land once devastated by war peace broods, and the fields that lay desolate now have yielded harvest." (Maclaren)

c. **He sends out His command to the earth:** This begins a series of short descriptions of God's presence and work in the natural world. God's work in the natural world begins with **His command to the earth**, with His **word that runs very swiftly**.

i. The Apostle Paul asked for prayer in 2Th 3:1, asking *that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified*. Paul probably had verse 15 of this psalm in mind when he wrote that.

ii. **His word runs very swiftly:** "If God's word runs very swiftly, then it can even overtake those who run away from it. Not only can the Lord come quickly to

those who seek him, but he can overtake those who hasten away from him.” (Spurgeon)

iii. **His command**: “...which is sufficient without any instruments to execute whatsoever pleaseth him, either in works of nature or of providence. His word runneth very swiftly; the thing is done without delay or difficulty.” (Poole)

d. **He gives snow like wool**: The psalmist considered God’s power as it is seen in cold weather. The **snow**, the **frost**, the **hail**, and the **cold** are all expressions of His power in nature. Then, when God **sends out His word and melts them**, it is another expression of His power.

i. Heb 1:3 describes Jesus as the one who is *upholding all things by the word of His power*. Verse 18 of this psalm reminds us that even the natural order of snow and melting and flowing waters happens as God **sends out His word**.

ii. **Sends out His word and melts them**: “He can as easily melt the hardest heart by his Word, made effectual to such a purpose by his Holy Spirit. If that wind does but blow, the waters of penitent tears will soon flow.” (Trapp)

iii. **He causes His wind to blow**: Spain attempted to invade England in 1588. The first step of their plan was to defeat the English Navy at sea. They sent 130 ships against England’s 90 ships, yet at a critical point of the long battle, a strong wind turned the Spanish armada away and more than half their fleet was lost. “The English victory was complete. The Spanish defeat was total. The English celebrated their deliverance by minting a new issue of coins, which bore the Latin inscription *Affavit Deus* (‘God blew’), taken from Psa 147:18 : ‘He stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.’ In those days there was at least one

nation that knew how to praise God for its safety.”
(Boice)

2. (19-20) *The presence and goodness of God’s word to Israel.*

**He declares His word to Jacob,
His statutes and His judgments to Israel.
He has not dealt thus with any nation;
And as for His judgments, they have not known them.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **He declares His word to Jacob:** The same God who orders and directs the natural world through His word has also brought the revelation of His heart and mind through His word to Israel. He has declared **His statutes and His judgments to Israel.**

i. The declaration of **His word** shows that God regards humanity as rational and capable of relationship. “So by addressing us, not programming us, God shows that he seeks a relationship, not simply a sequence of actions carried out.” (Kidner)

ii. “The Jews were God’s library keepers; and unto them (as a special favour) were committed those lively and life-giving oracles, Rom 3:2.” (Trapp)

iii. “He who is the Creator is also the Revealer. We are to praise the Lord above all things for his manifesting himself to us.” (Spurgeon)

b. **He has not dealt thus with any nation:** God uniquely chose Israel to be the receivers and guardians of His revealed word. He did not choose the Philistines or the Edomites or the Egyptians for this role. The other nations **have not known** the **judgments** of God (that is, His word).

i. As the Apostle Paul would later write, one of the chief advantages God gave to Israel is that He

committed to them *the oracles of God* (Rom 3:2). Israel received this responsibility seriously, and took great care to copy, learn, and preserve the Hebrew Scriptures.

ii. "The psalmist is not rejoicing that other nations have not received these, but that Israel has. Its privilege is its responsibility. It has received them that it may obey them, and then that it may make them known." (Maclaren)

c. **Praise the LORD:** Understanding the greatness of God, His care for humanity and all of nature, and the remarkable power and nature of His word, should move us to **praise** Him all the more. *Hallelujah!*

Praise the Name of the Lord

Psa 148:1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from heaven, you that live in the heights above.

Psa 148:2 Praise him, all his angels, all his heavenly armies.

Psa 148:3 Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, shining stars.

Psa 148:4 Praise him, highest heavens, and the waters above the sky.

Psa 148:5 Let them all praise the name of the LORD! He commanded, and they were created;

Psa 148:6 by his command they were fixed in their places forever, and they cannot disobey.

Psa 148:7 Praise the LORD from the earth, sea monsters and all ocean depths;

Psa 148:8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds, strong winds that obey his command.

Psa 148:9 Praise him, hills and mountains, fruit trees and forests;

Psa 148:10 all animals, tame and wild, reptiles and birds.

Psa 148:11 Praise him, kings and all peoples, princes and all other rulers;

Psa 148:12 young women and young men, old people and children too.

Psa 148:13 Let them all praise the name of the LORD! His name is greater than all others; his glory is above earth and heaven.

Psa 148:14 He made his nation strong, so that all his people praise him—the people of Israel, so dear to him. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 148:1-14

Psalms 148 – Let Heaven and Earth Praise the LORD

Psalms 148 calls upon all creation to praise Yahweh. "What a wonderful song this is! Look over it again, and note the fact that there is no reference in it, from first to last, to the mercy, or pity, or compassion of God. But that is because there is no reference to evil in any form." (G. Campbell Morgan)

Alexander Maclaren wrote that Psalms 148 continues "...a line of thought which runs through Scripture from its first page to its last – namely, that, as man's sin subjected the creatures to 'vanity,' so his redemption shall be their glorifying."

This call to all creation to praise Yahweh is not an empty wish. Rev 5:11-13 tells us specifically that it will be fulfilled. "O what a hymn of praise is here! It is a universal chorus! All created nature have a share, and all perform their respective parts." (Adam Clarke)

A. Praise from the heavens.

1. (1-4) Calling upon heavenly things to praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!
Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts!
Praise Him, sun and moon;
Praise Him, all you stars of light!
Praise Him, you heavens of heavens,
And you waters above the heavens!

a. **Praise the LORD:** Like each of the last five psalms in the Book of Psalms, Psalms 148 begins and ends with *hallelujah*, which is both an exclamation of praise to Yahweh and an encouragement to praise Him.

b. **Praise the LORD from the heavens:** The psalmist considered that all heavenly beings and bodies should give praise to Yahweh. The God of Israel was not a local deity who only expected honor from Israel. He was and is God over all, and as such deserves such praise **in the heights**.

i. Psalms 19 told us that *the heavens declare the glory of God* by their very nature and being. Here the psalmist speaks to the heavens that they continue this praise.

ii. "As God in framing the world began above and wrought downward, so doth the psalmist in this his exhortation to all creatures to praise the Lord." (Trapp)

iii. **In the heights:** "The very 'heights above,' where God rules...together with outer space and the atmosphere of the earth, are invoked to join in Israel's praise." (VanGemeren)

c. **Praise Him, all His angels:** The psalmist called upon all angelic beings to give God praise. This is the constant

occupation of the living creatures surrounding God's throne (Rev 4:8). The company of faithful angels is like a great army (**all His hosts**).

i. Other angelic beings fell because they would not properly honor God (Isa 14:12-15).

ii. "Not only in Old Testament times but in the Christian era, men have been tempted to worship *angels* (Col 2:18), who are our fellow servants (Rev 22:8 f.), and to treat the *stars* as arbiters of destiny. The psalm sweeps away such folly." (Kidner)

d. **Praise Him, sun and moon...all you stars of light:** Heavenly bodies should also praise God, shining in their radiance for His honor and moving according to His plan.

i. The idea of creation praising God is found in many places in the Scriptures (such as Psa 98:7-8 and Isa 55:12). This is the only place where specifically it is said that the **sun and moon** and the **stars** should praise Him.

ii. "Though they have neither speech nor language, and [lack] the tongue of men, yet by their splendor and magnificence, their motions and their influences, all regulated and exerted according to the ordinance of their Maker, do, in a very intelligible and striking manner, declare the glory of God." (Horne)

iii. "In these starry depths obedience reigns; it is only on earth that a being lives who can and will break the merciful barriers of Jehovah's law." (Maclaren)

iv. **You stars of light:** "...the brightest and most luminous stars: probably the planets may be especially intended." (Clarke)

e. **Praise Him, you heavens of heavens:** In the mind of an ancient Hebrew, the blue sky, the night sky, and God's dwelling place could all be thought of as an aspect

of the **heavens**. The singer here looks to the ultimate of heaven, and all the **heavens**, to praise God, including the clouds with their **waters**.

i. **Heavens of heavens**: "Ye highest and most glorious heavens, the place of God's throne and glorious presence, as this phrase is used, Deu 10:14, 1Ki 8:27, Neh 9:6, Psa 115:16. Or, ye starry heavens, which also may well be so called, because they are above the air, which is often called heaven in Scripture." (Poole)

ii. Adam Clarke speculated that these **heavens of heavens** were of them being other planets or solar systems. "Heavens exceeding heavens. Systems of systems extending as far beyond the solar system."

iii. "The *waters above the heavens* are a poetic or popular term for the rain clouds." (Kidner)

2. (5-6) *Reasons why the heavens should praise the LORD.*

**Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.
He also established them forever and ever;
He made a decree which shall not pass away.**

a. **For He commanded and they were created**: All creatures or creations owe honor and praise to their Creator, especially things created by the simple command of their Creator. Such a mighty maker deserves praise.

i. "Evolution may be atheistic; but the doctrine of creation logically demands worship; and hence, as the tree is known by its fruit, it proves itself to be true. Those who were created by command are under command to adore their Creator." (Spurgeon)

b. **He also established them forever and ever**: These heavenly things – angels, the sun, the moon, the stars,

the sky itself – were not only *made* by God, but they also *continue* because of His word (**a decree**). Their continued establishment gives them reason to praise the God who decreed it.

i. “Therefore ought the Lord to be praised because he is Preserver as well as Creator, Ruler as well as Maker.” (Spurgeon)

B. Praise from the earth.

1. (7-12) Calling upon earthly things to praise the LORD.

**Praise the LORD from the earth,
You great sea creatures and all the depths;
Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
Mountains and all hills;
Fruitful trees and all cedars;
Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and flying fowl;
Kings of the earth and all peoples;
Princes and all judges of the earth;
Both young men and maidens;
Old men and children.**

a. **Praise the LORD from the earth:** The first part of this psalm called upon things in the heavens to give praise to Yahweh. **Earth** should also not fail to give its praise to God, and all the earth should join in this praise.

i. Modern men and women make the mistake of worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. “We worship it [nature] in place of God, attributing creative powers to nature and virtually deifying the dynamic within living things. In opposition to this sad pagan error, the psalmist reminds us that the animals themselves worship God.” (Boice)

b. **You great sea creatures:** All things in the **sea** and all the phenomenon of weather (**fire and hail, snow, clouds, wind**) should praise God, **fulfilling His word**.

i. **Great sea creatures:** "...either, 1. Dragons and serpents, which abide in the deep caverns and holes of the earth; or, 2. Whales or other sea-monsters, which dwell in the depths of the sea, which are oft called by this name, as Job 7:12, Eze 29:3, and elsewhere, as the word here rendered." (Poole)

ii. "Its enormous inhabitants, which are under the command of Jehovah, and of none but him." (Horne)

c. **Mountains and all hills:** Everything on the land, both fixed and moving – including all the animals of the land – should give praise to the LORD.

i. **Beasts:** "Those are worse than beasts who do not praise our God. More than brutish are those who are wilfully silent concerning their Maker." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Creeping things and flying fowl:** "The lowest worm that crawls and the light-winged bird that soars, these all have voices to praise God." (Maclaren)

d. **Kings of the earth and all peoples:** Yahweh's praise should be proclaimed by all who are made in His image. All humanity – **kings, princes, judges, young and old** – all owe praise to the God who made them and sustains them.

i. "After the whole creation hath been called upon to praise Jehovah; man, for whom the whole was made; man, the last and more perfect work of God; man, that hath been since redeemed by the blood of the Son of God incarnate, is exhorted to join and fill up the universal chorus of heaven and earth." (Horne)

ii. "The young man's strong bass, the maiden's clear alto, the old man's quavering notes, the child's fresh

treble, should blend in the song.” (Maclaren)

iii. That *all* men and women will one day praise the LORD is certain: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (Php 2:10-11)

2. (13-14) *Reasons why the earth should praise the LORD.*

**Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above the earth and heaven.
And He has exalted the horn of His people,
The praise of all His saints—
Of the children of Israel,
A people near to Him.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **For His name alone is exalted:** Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because He alone is God. There is no other being that deserves the worship, honor, and praise that God deserves.

i. **Let them praise:** VanGemeren points out that this is in the form of a command. “By the use of the jussive [command], the psalmist restates the universal obligation of all of God’s creation to demonstrate their allegiance by praising him.”

b. **His glory is above the earth and heaven:** Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because He is immeasurably greater and more glorious than anything on earth. We should reserve our praise for only that which is truly greater and more glorious, not for the lesser things (such as the idols of men’s hands).

i. “He is himself the crown of all things, the excellency of the creation. There is more glory in him personally

than in all his works united. It is not possible for us to exceed and become extravagant in the Lord's praise: his own natural glory is infinitely greater than any glory which we can render to him." (Spurgeon)

c. **He has exalted the horn of His people:** Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because He has rescued and established **His people**. Those who find their power (**the horn of His people**) established because of Yahweh owe Him praise.

i. "God loves and cares for all his creation, but he has a special affinity for 'his people,' 'his saints'." (VanGemeran)

ii. **Of the children of Israel:** "It is a nation of priests, having the privilege of access to His presence; and, in the consciousness of this dignity, 'comes forward in this psalm as the leader of all the creatures in their praise of God, and strikes up a hallelujah that is to be joined in by heaven and earth' (Delitzsch)." (Maclaren)

iii. "His goodness to all his creatures does not prevent his having a special favour to his chosen nation: he is good to all, but he is God to his people." (Spurgeon)

d. **A people near to Him:** Yahweh deserves such praise from all things on earth because He has drawn **near** to His people. He is with and for His people, a blessing and a benefit greater than any other.

i. **A people near to Him:** "And in that respect happy above all people on the earth, Deu 4:7; Deu 33:29, because in covenant with him and near allied to him, as the word here importeth." (Trapp)

e. **Praise the LORD:** The composer of Psalms 148 has persuaded us to do what we and all creation should do – give to Yahweh the praise due to Him. *Hallelujah!*

Sing to the Lord a New Song

Psa 149:1 Praise the LORD! Sing a new song to the LORD; praise him in the assembly of his faithful people!

Psa 149:2 Be glad, Israel, because of your Creator; rejoice, people of Zion, because of your king!

Psa 149:3 Praise his name with dancing; play drums and harps in praise of him.

Psa 149:4 The LORD takes pleasure in his people; he honors the humble with victory.

Psa 149:5 Let God's people rejoice in their triumph and sing joyfully all night long.

Psa 149:6 Let them shout aloud as they praise God, with their sharp swords in their hands

Psa 149:7 to defeat the nations and to punish the peoples;

Psa 149:8 to bind their kings in chains, their leaders in chains of iron;

Psa 149:9 to punish the nations as God has commanded. This is the victory of God's people. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 149:1-9

Psalms 149 – The High Praises of God and a Two-Edged Sword

This is another of the last five psalms that have no title in the Hebrew text, but each of these last five begin and end with Hallelujah or Praise the LORD!

A. The praise of God's people.

*1. (1) Praising Yahweh with a **new song**.*

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,

And His praise in the assembly of saints.

a. **Praise the LORD:** The last five of the 150 collected psalms begin and end with this phrase. In many (or

most) of the previous songs there was a trouble, crisis, or evil described and brought before the LORD. In these last psalms, it is all praise.

b. **Sing to the LORD a new song:** God loves to receive the rejoicing and praise of His people expressed in **song**, especially the **new song**. The **new song** can come from an old saint as he or she gains fresh awareness of God's love and grace.

i. "He is ever new in his manifestations; his mercies are new every morning; his deliverances are new in every night of sorrow; let your gratitude and thanksgivings be new also." (Spurgeon)

c. **And His praise in the assembly of saints:** It is wonderful for the individual saint to offer praise to God; it is even better and greater to do so **in the assembly of saints**. The community of God's people makes praise all the richer, especially praise offered in **song**.

2. (2-4) The pleasure of true praise.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Let them praise His name with the dance;

Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;

He will beautify the humble with salvation.

a. **Let Israel rejoice in their Maker:** If one ever lacked for reasons to praise God, there is one great reason that is always at hand. It is always *right* and *honorable* for us to praise and **rejoice** in our Creator.

i. "The starting point for us creatures must be our acknowledgment of the Creator, since it is only when we have begun to know God as our Creator that we can appreciate what we owe him and understand how

we have failed to praise and thank him properly.”
(Boice)

b. **Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King:** God is the **Maker** of all humanity, but is recognized as **King** only over His people. This recognition is a source of incomparable joy to His people, who realize they could never hope for a ruler greater in love, wisdom, and power.

i. It is common for people to be **joyful** over a political leader or a head of state. The visit of such a ruler is treated as a happy, special occasion. Believers regard it is a special and **joyful** thing to recognize and enjoy the presence of their **King**.

ii. “The true splendor of kings lies not in what their people do for them, but in what they do for their people: and herein our Lord excelleth all the princes that ever lived.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Let them praise His name with the dance:** The joy among God’s people in their Creator and King was evidenced by **dance**, song, and instrumental music. These were happy expressions of gratitude, and show that God approves of and encourages such happiness among His people.

i. Adam Clarke disagreed with most translations that the Hebrew word here translated **dance**(*mahol*) means a flute or musical pipe, not a dance. “I know no place in the Bible where *machol* and *machalath* mean *dance* of any kind; they constantly signify some kind of *pipe*.”

d. **For the LORD takes pleasure in His people:** If God is so rich in grace and mercy that He takes **pleasure in His people** – despite all their sin and weakness – it is cause for great rejoicing.

i. "It is the constant teaching of Scripture that we may please God. This was the testimony borne of Enoch before his translation, and the apostle [Paul] exhorts us to walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing." (Meyer)

ii. "Such 'pleasure' the King of Zion taketh in his people, that he hath [chosen] to become like one of them; to partake of their flesh and blood." (Horne)

iii. "What is there in us in which the Lord can take pleasure? Nothing, unless he has put it there. If he sees any beauty in us, it must be the reflection of his own face. Yet still the text says so, and therefore it must be true: 'The Lord taketh pleasure in his people.'" (Spurgeon)

e. **He will beautify the humble with salvation:** Most of the great ones among men despise the **humble** and leave them in their low condition. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the **humble** (Jas 4:6, 1Pe 5:5). He makes **the humble** beautiful with **salvation**.

i. "Not only does God take a personal interest in each step of the obedient soul, but He makes it beautiful, and leads it from victory to victory." (Meyer)

ii. "The qualification for receiving Jehovah's help is meekness, and the effect of that help on the lowly soul is to deck it with strange loveliness." (Maclaren)

iii. "God taketh pleasure in all his children as Jacob loved all his sons; but the meek are his Josephs, and upon these he puts the coat of many colours, beautifying them with peace, contentment, joy, holiness, and influence." (Spurgeon)

B. The power of God's people.

1. (5-6) Making ready for conflict.

**Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,**

a. **Let the saints be joyful in glory:** The spirit of the first part of this psalm continues. The saints are so happy in God's glory that they **sing aloud on their beds**. Waking hours do not give enough time to express all their praise and joy unto God, so they must continue it **on their beds**.

i. This reminds us that though songs of praise are especially wonderful among the assembly of God's people (verse 1), they should never be restricted to the assembly. It is a sacred and wonderful thing for the saints to **sing aloud on their beds**.

b. **Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand:** God's people are pictured as ready for battle, equipped with two mighty weapons.

- They bear **the high praises of God**; their worship indicates the allegiance and surrender to the God of every victory. In 2Ch 20:20-21, a great victory was won for the people of God as they entered the battle with praise.

- They bear **a two-edged sword in their hand**, demonstrating both the use of practical weapons and means, and in a spiritual sense, reliance upon God's word, which is described as a **two-edged sword** (Rev 19:15) as even sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb 4:12), and as the **sword** of the Spirit (Eph 6:17).

i. "Their praise is not merely to be that of the chanting of words. It is also to be in the doing of His

will. While the high praises of God are in their mouth, a two-edged sword is to be in their hand, with which they carry out His purposes among the peoples, the kings, and the nobles.” (Morgan)

ii. “In this state of mind, the Lord will grant victory to his people, as he did to Nehemiah and his men who worked with ‘sword and trowel’ while praying to the Lord (Neh 4:9; Neh 4:16-23), believing that ‘Our God will fight for us!’ (Neh 4:20).” (VanGemenen)

iii. A saying among Americans came from the Second World War: *Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.* Psa 149:6 has something of that idea.

iv. The combination of these two – **the high praises of God** and **the two-edged sword** – spiritually speaks to every leader among God’s people. The gatherings of God’s people should excel in *both* praise and the preaching of God’s word. We should always press to have excellent **praises of God** and a right, sharp handling of the **sword** of the Spirit.

v. “The word of God is all edge; whichever way we turn it, it strikes deadly blows at falsehood and wickedness. If we do not praise we shall grow sad in our conflict; and if we do not fight we shall become presumptuous in our song. The verse indicates a happy blending of the chorister and the crusader.” (Spurgeon)

vi. “If you had a sword of steel, you would fight with men; but that is no part of your business. You are not called to that cruel work; but, as you have the sword of the Spirit...go forth and praise God by the use of that two-edged sword which is the Word of God.” (Spurgeon)

2. (7-9) *The victory of God’s people.*

**To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the written judgment—
This honor have all His saints.
Praise the LORD!**

a. **To execute vengeance on the nations:** The power of praise and the word of God will ultimately see God's work accomplished among **the nations**. For those who persist in disobedience, it will be **vengeance** and **punishments** at the end of the age. Not even **kings** or **nobles** can escape this judgment to come.

i. "The stern close of the psalm strikes a note which many ears feel to be discordant.... [Yet] it is entirely free from any sentiment of personal vengeance."
(Maclaren)

ii. **Execute vengeance:** "...for all their cruelties and injuries towards God's people. This was literally accomplished by David upon the Philistines, Ammonites, Syrians, and other neighbouring nations and princes, which were bitter enemies to God's people." (Poole)

iii. We see that in the immediate context of the psalmist, in some way Israel was to be the agent to **execute vengeance**. This means that their joyful praise had to connect itself to radical obedience, even to God's difficult and costly commands. As believers under the New Covenant, we don't battle flesh and blood enemies (Eph 6:12-18), yet we have the responsibility to be not only worshippers, but warriors in a spiritual warfare that at times will be difficult and costly. In a spiritual sense, we are to **execute**

vengeance on every thing that would oppose Jesus Christ and the work of His kingdom in our lives.

iv. "Our equivalent of binding *kings with chains* (8) is to 'take every thought captive to obey Christ' (2Co 10:5).\" (Kidner)

v. **To execute on them the written judgment:** "It would be a sad thing for any one to misuse this text: lest any warlike believer should be led to do so, we would remind him that the execution must not go beyond the sentence and warrant; and we have received no warrant of execution against our fellow men.\" (Spurgeon)

vi. For the believer under the New Covenant, there is a **written judgment** against every spiritual enemy, and Jesus wrote it by His work on the cross (Joh 16:11, Col 2:14).

vii. **To execute vengeance:** "The history of this song is one of great sadness, due to grave misinterpretation, and grievous misapplication. Delitzsch has said: 'By means of this Psalm, Caspar Scioppius, in his *Classicum belli sacri*.... inflamed the Roman Catholic princes to the Thirty Years' Religious War and, within the Protestant Church, Thomas Münzer, by means of this Psalm, stirred up the War of the Peasants.'\" (Morgan)

viii. Especially in light of how this verse has been abused, it is important to remember what Morgan noted: "There is no reference in this Psalm to the Church of God. As it specifically indicates, it has to do with 'Israel,' with 'the children of Zion.'\"

b. **This honor have all His saints:** In some way beyond our present comprehension, God will use His people in setting right the wrongs of this present age.

Even if our participation is only as an audience to the righteous judgments of God, it will be an **honor** to **all His saints**.

i. "They are redeemed from bondage that they may be God's warriors. The honour and obligation are universal." (Maclaren)

c. **Praise the LORD**: This sentence – one word in the Hebrew, *hallelujah* – is understood as either a declaration or an exhortation. Here especially it can be taken as an exhortation and encouragement for all those who reject and resist God to **praise** Him instead, to be among **His saints** and not among **the nations** who will receive God's vengeance.

Let Everything Praise the Lord

Psa 150:1 Praise the LORD! Praise God in his Temple! Praise his strength in heaven!

Psa 150:2 Praise him for the mighty things he has done. Praise his supreme greatness.

Psa 150:3 Praise him with trumpets. Praise him with harps and lyres.

Psa 150:4 Praise him with drums and dancing. Praise him with harps and flutes.

Psa 150:5 Praise him with cymbals. Praise him with loud cymbals.

Psa 150:6 Praise the LORD, all living creatures! Praise the LORD!

Psalms 150:1-6

Psalms 150 – Let All Things Praise the LORD

Each of the five divisions of the Book of Psalms closes with a doxology (Psa 41:13; Psa 72:18-19; Psa 89:52; Psa 106:48). This entire psalm can be seen as a doxology

that not only closes the fifth and final volume of the collected psalms, but also closes the entire Book of Psalms.

Psalms 150 contains no argument, no real teaching, no real explanation. It is an eloquent, passionate cry to all creation to give Yahweh the praise due to Him.

"The psalm is more than an artistic close of the Psalter: it is a prophecy of the last result of the devout life, and, in its unclouded sunniness, as well as in its universality, it proclaims the certain end of the weary years for the individual and for the world." (Alexander Maclaren)

A. Unlimited praise to the God who is unlimited in His greatness.

1. (1) In every place, praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

a. **Praise the LORD:** This last of the five ending psalms shares the same beginning and ending line as the previous four. Yahweh is praised, and His people are encouraged, exhorted to praise Him. No crisis or enemy is in view; this is pure praise.

b. **Praise God in His sanctuary:** The **sanctuary** of God is a most fitting place for His **praise**. It is a place set apart for His honor, and involves special recognition of His presence. If Yahweh is to be praised anywhere, it should be in **His sanctuary**.

i. In light of the New Covenant, we realize that God's **sanctuary** is not fixed to a particular building in Jerusalem.

- Jesus serves His people in a sanctuary in the heavens (Heb 8:1-2).

- Jesus makes His sanctuary among His people collectively (2Co 6:16).
- Jesus makes His sanctuary in the individual believer (1Co 3:16).
- Ultimately, Jesus Himself will be the sanctuary of God among His people (Rev 21:22).

ii. **Praise God in His sanctuary:** "In many places we have the compound word *halelu-yah*, praise ye Jehovah; but this is the first place in which we find *halelu-el*, praise God, or the strong God." (Clarke)

c. **Praise Him in His mighty firmament:** The wide expanse of sky, with all its might in storms and weather, is also a fitting place to praise God. Since the **firmament** stretches from horizon to horizon, it tells us that God should be praised in every place under the sky.

i. "His glory fills the universe; his praise must do no less." (Kidner)

ii. **In His mighty firmament:** "Through the whole expanse, to the utmost limits of his power.... Praise him whose power and goodness extend through all worlds; and let the inhabitants of all those worlds share in the grand chorus, that it may be universal." (Clarke)

2. (2) *For every reason, praise the LORD.*

Praise Him for His mighty acts;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

a. **Praise Him for His mighty acts:** God's mighty acts are one reason to praise God in every place. He has done great and powerful things, especially what Jesus accomplished at the cross and the empty tomb. The singer of this psalm had only shadowy knowledge of it, but the ultimate demonstration of God's power would

come in the resurrection of Jesus (Eph 1:19-20). For this and all **His mighty acts**, we should **praise Him**.

i. “‘His mighty deeds’ might be rendered ‘His heroic [or, valiant] acts.’ The reference is to His deliverance of His people as a clear manifestation of prowess or conquering might.” (Maclaren)

ii. “‘Mighty’ were the ‘acts’ which God wrought for Israel; and ‘great’ was the Holy One in the midst of his ancient people; but mightier acts did he perform in Christ Jesus, for the redemption of the world.” (Horne)

b. Praise Him according to His excellent greatness:

While it is right to praise God for the mighty things He does, there is perhaps something even greater in praising Him for *who He is*, in all the excellence of His **greatness**. This greatness surpasses all else in the entire universe, **excellent** above all.

i. **His excellent greatness:** “...or, Greatness of greatness; which yet can never be done, but must be endeavoured.” (Trapp)

3. (3-5) With every expression, praise the LORD.

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;

Praise Him with the lute and harp!

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;

Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

Praise Him with loud cymbals;

Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

a. **Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet:** The psalmist referred to an orchestra of God’s people and conducted their music in praise to God. There was to be no instrument left out. Brass, string, wind, and percussion must all join in the praise of a God so great.

i. There was good reason to mention **the trumpet** first in this long list. "The sound of trumpet is associated with the grandest and most solemn events, such as the giving of the law, the proclamation of jubilee, the coronation of Jewish kings, and the raging of war. It is to be thought of in reference to the coming of our Lord in his second advent and the raising of the dead." (Spurgeon)

ii. Adam Clarke described what he believed each musical instrument here mentioned to be.

- **Trumpet:** "*Sophar*, from its noble, cheering, and majestic sound."

- **Lute:** "*Nebel*; the *nabla*, a hollow stringed instrument; perhaps like the *guitar*."

- **Harp:** "*Kinnor*, another *stringed* instrument, played on with the *hands* or *fingers*."

- **Timbrel:** "*Toph*, *drum*, *tabret*, or *tomtom*, or *tympanum* of the ancients; a skin stretched over a broad hoop; perhaps something like the *tambourine*."

- **Dance:** "*Machol*, the *pipe*...it never means *dance*; see note on Psa 149:3."

- **Stringed instruments:** "*Minnim*. This literally signifies *strings put in order*; perhaps a *triangular kind of hollow instrument* on which the strings were regularly placed, growing *shorter* and *shorter* till they came to a *point*."

- **Flutes:** "*Ugab*. Very likely the *syrinx* or *mouth organ*; *Pan's pipe*; both of the ancients and moderns."

- **Loud cymbals:** "*Tseltselim*. Two hollow plates of brass, which, being struck together, produced a sharp clanging sound."

- **Clashing cymbals:** “[Perhaps] those of a *larger make*, struck above the head, and consequently emitting a louder sound.”

iii. “The list of instruments is not meant to be comprehensive, though it may be. We do not know what instruments the ancient Jews had. The point is actually that everything you have can be used to worship God.” (Boice)

iv. The broad list of musical instruments tells us that God wants *every* class and group of people to praise Him, because these instruments were normally played by different types of people. “The horn was the curved ‘*Shophar*,’ blown by the priests; harp and psaltery were played by the Levites, timbrels were struck by women [as they were] dancing, playing on stringed instruments, and pipes and cymbals, were not reserved for the Levites.” (Maclaren)

b. **Praise Him with loud cymbals:** The individual instruments must be played with strength and celebration, and the collection of them together would fill the room with sound. This was not halting or hesitant praise – just like the love and goodness of God are not halting or hesitant toward us in any way.

i. “Let’s be done with worship that is *a/ways* weak and unexciting. If you cannot sing loudly and make loud music to praise the God who has redeemed you in Jesus Christ and is preparing you for heaven, perhaps it is because you do not really know God or the gospel at all. If you do know him, hallelujah.” (Boice)

4. (6) *With every available breath, praise the LORD.*

**Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!**

a. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD:

This is a remarkably fitting conclusion to this psalm and to the entire Book of Psalms. Everything that breathes should give its praise to the One who gave it **breath**. Every breath is the gift of God and praise is the worthy response we should make for that gift.

i. Derek Kidner noted that the literal phrase is, "Let all breath praise the Lord."

ii. John Trapp wrote, "Or, Let every breath praise the Lord.... We have all as much reason to praise God as we have need to draw breath."

iii. "The word *nesamah* [**has breath**] denotes all living creatures, endowed with life by the Creator (Gen 1:24-25; Gen 7:21-22), but always in distinction from the Creator." (VanGemeren)

iv. "The one condition of praise is the possession of breath, that is to say, life received from Him must return in praise to Him." (Morgan)

v. Rev 5:13 tells us that this *will* happen: *And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

b. Praise the LORD: The last line of the Psalter could be nothing else than *Hallelujah!* Yahweh is to be praised and honored, and will be so among His people and all creation.

i. "The psalter begins with 'Blessed,' and ends with 'Hallelujah.'" (Meyer)

ii. "Your life may resemble the psalter with its varying moods, its light and shadow, its sob and smile; but it

will end with hallelujahs, if only you will keep true to the will and way and work of the Most Holy.” (Meyer)